

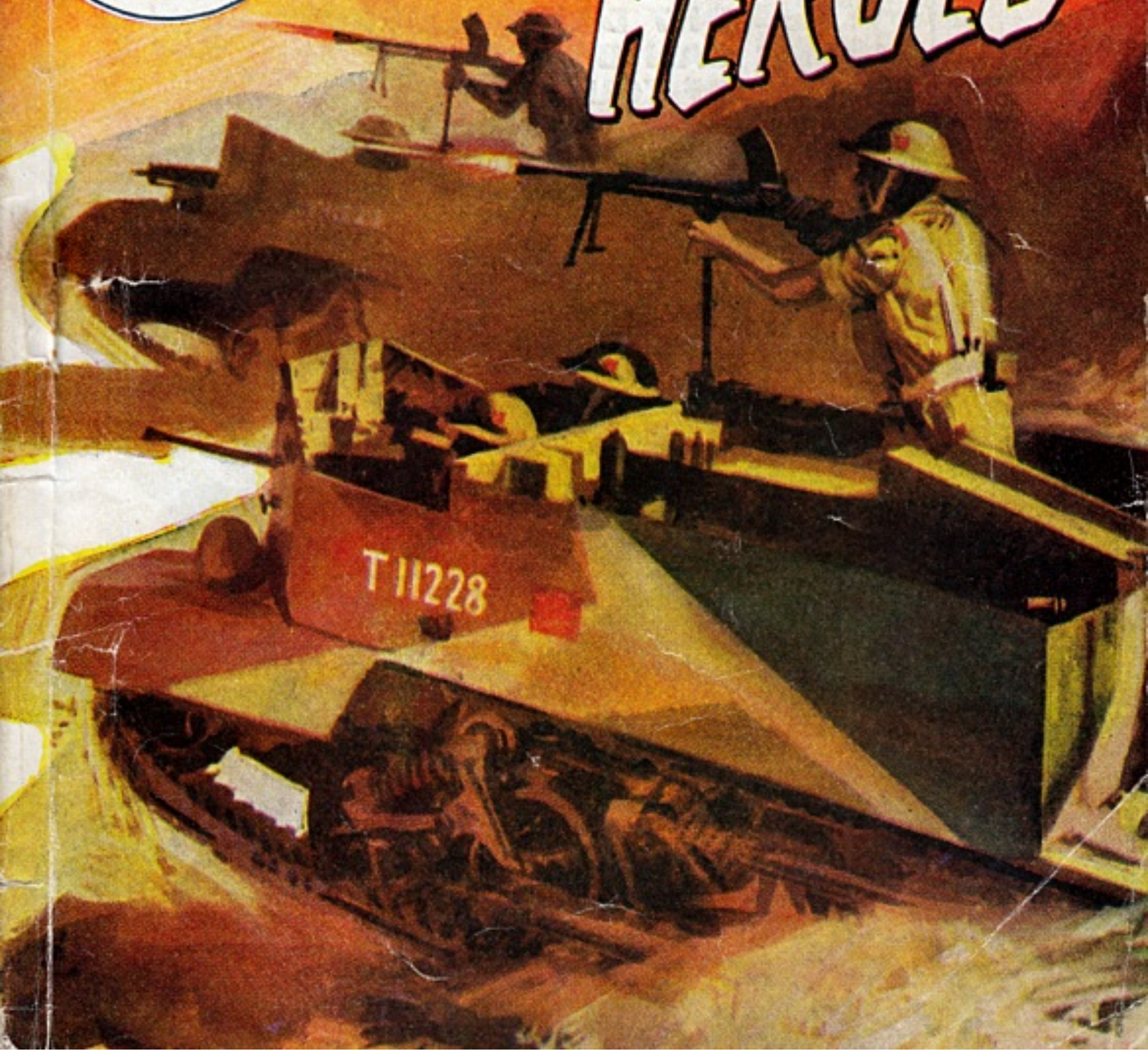
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COMPANY OF HEROES





Show them you can become a husky he-man

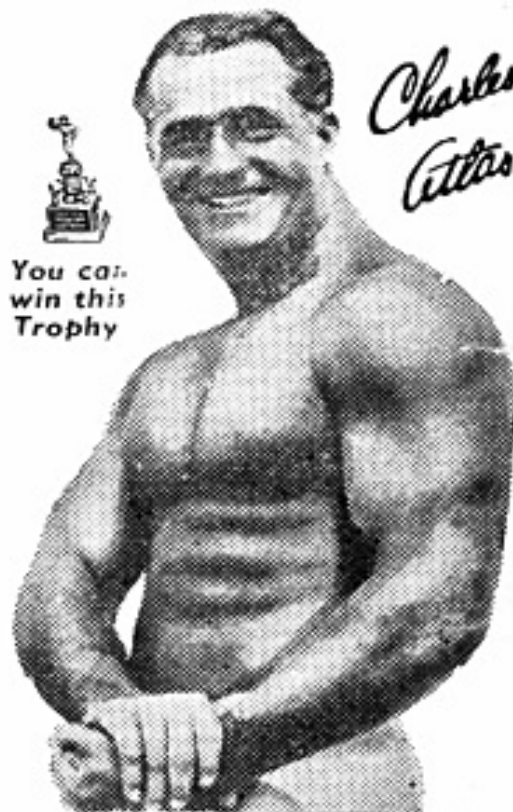
**IN 7 DAYS—I'LL PROVE YOU
CAN BE PROUD
OF YOUR BODY!**

Don't let others take the "mickey" out of you because of your skinny build! Give me seven days and I'll prove that you'll add powerful **NEW MUSCLE** so fast your friends will gape with wonder! I don't dose or doctor you. And I've no use for weights and other contraptions that may strain your vital inner organs.

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Send me absolutely **FREE** a copy of your famous book showing how "Dynamic-Tension" can make me a new man and details of your amazing **7-DAY FREE TRIAL OFFER.**

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.....

.....

Company of Heroes

IT WAS LATE 1943, AND THE SWEEPING ADVANCE OF THE ALLIED ARMIES TOWARDS NORTHERN ITALY WAS SLOWLY BEING BROUGHT TO A HALT BY STUBBORN GERMAN RESISTANCE. IN THE HILLY COUNTRY ROUND CASSINO, FIGHTING WAS FIERCE AND RELENTLESS... AND CASUALTIES WERE MOUNTING ON BOTH SIDES...



Chapter 1. *Perilous Journey*



BEHIND THE ALLIED LINES, THE BACKROOM BOYS OF THE BRITISH ARMY, THE ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS, STEADILY KEPT UP THEIR WORK - TO KEEP THE FRONT LINE SUPPLIED. ALTHOUGH THEIR JOB LACKED THE GLORY OF FRONT-LINE FIGHTING, IT WAS EQUALLY TOUGH AND ESSENTIAL.

DRIVING THEIR HUGE, HEAVILY LADEN LORRIES THROUGH LONG HOURS OF DARKNESS, THROUGH FLOOD AND SOMETIMES FIRE, THE SERVICE CORPS DRIVERS NEEDED NERVES OF STEEL AND GREAT ENDURANCE.



TO SOME OF THE DRIVERS, THE DAILY LORRY RUNS HAD BECOME TOO BORING, TOO UNGLAMOROUS. DRIVER 'PINKY' BARTON, FOR INSTANCE, LOOKED MORE LIKE A COLLEGE PROFESSOR, IN HIS THICK-LENSED SPECTACLES, BUT WITHIN HIS FRAIL FRAME BEAT THE HEART OF A WARRIOR!



HIS DISLIKE OF THE JOB INCREASED WHEN HE WAS HOME ON LEAVE. NEXT TO HIS THREE BATTLE-HARDENED BROTHERS HE FELT EMBARRASSED AND WHENEVER THE CONVERSATION TURNED TO THE WAR, HE WOULD SHAME-FACEDLY SLINK AWAY.



Company Of Heroes

EVEN TO THE MEN OF HIS OWN UNIT, PINKY WAS A 'STANDING JOKE'...

HALLO! THERE'S MISTER UNIVERSE HIMSELF!

LOOKS MORE LIKE A BROOMSTICK TO ME!



THEN, ONE DAY, PINKY WAS CALLED TO THE COMPANY OFFICE...

AS FROM NOW, BARTON, YOU WILL DELIVER DAILY RIGHT UP TO THE TENTH BANSHIRES BATTALION HEADQUARTERS!



PINKY'S HEART POUNDED WITH EXCITEMENT. HERE WAS A CHANCE TO GET EVEN NEARER TO THE FRONT-LINE!

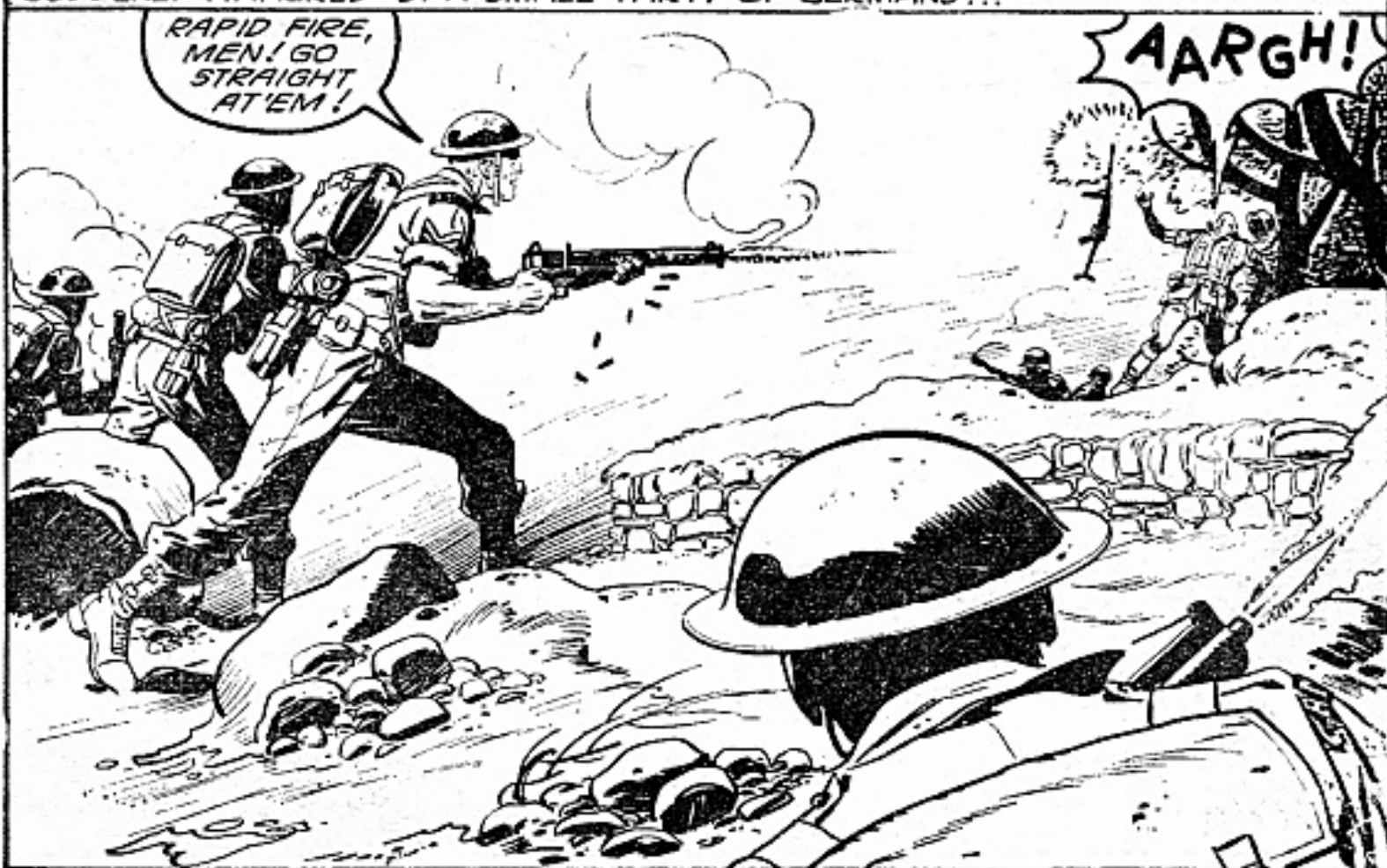
THERE HAVE BEEN SO MANY VEHICLE AND PERSONNEL CASUALTIES IN THE BATTALION THAT THEY CAN'T AFFORD TO PICK UP SUPPLIES FROM BRIGADE ANYMORE! WATCH OUT FOR YOUR TRUCK - THEY'RE SCARCE!



NEXT MORNING, AS HIS LORRY RUMBLLED ITS WAY THROUGH THE TWISTING MOUNTAIN ROADS TO THE TENTH BANSHIRES H.Q., PINKY'S THOUGHTS RACED EXCITEDLY...



AT THAT SAME MOMENT, SERGEANT JIM DECKER OF THE TENTH BANSHIRES WAS LEADING HIS MEN BACK FROM A DAWN RECCE WHEN THEY WERE SUDDENLY ATTACKED BY A SMALL PARTY OF GERMANS...

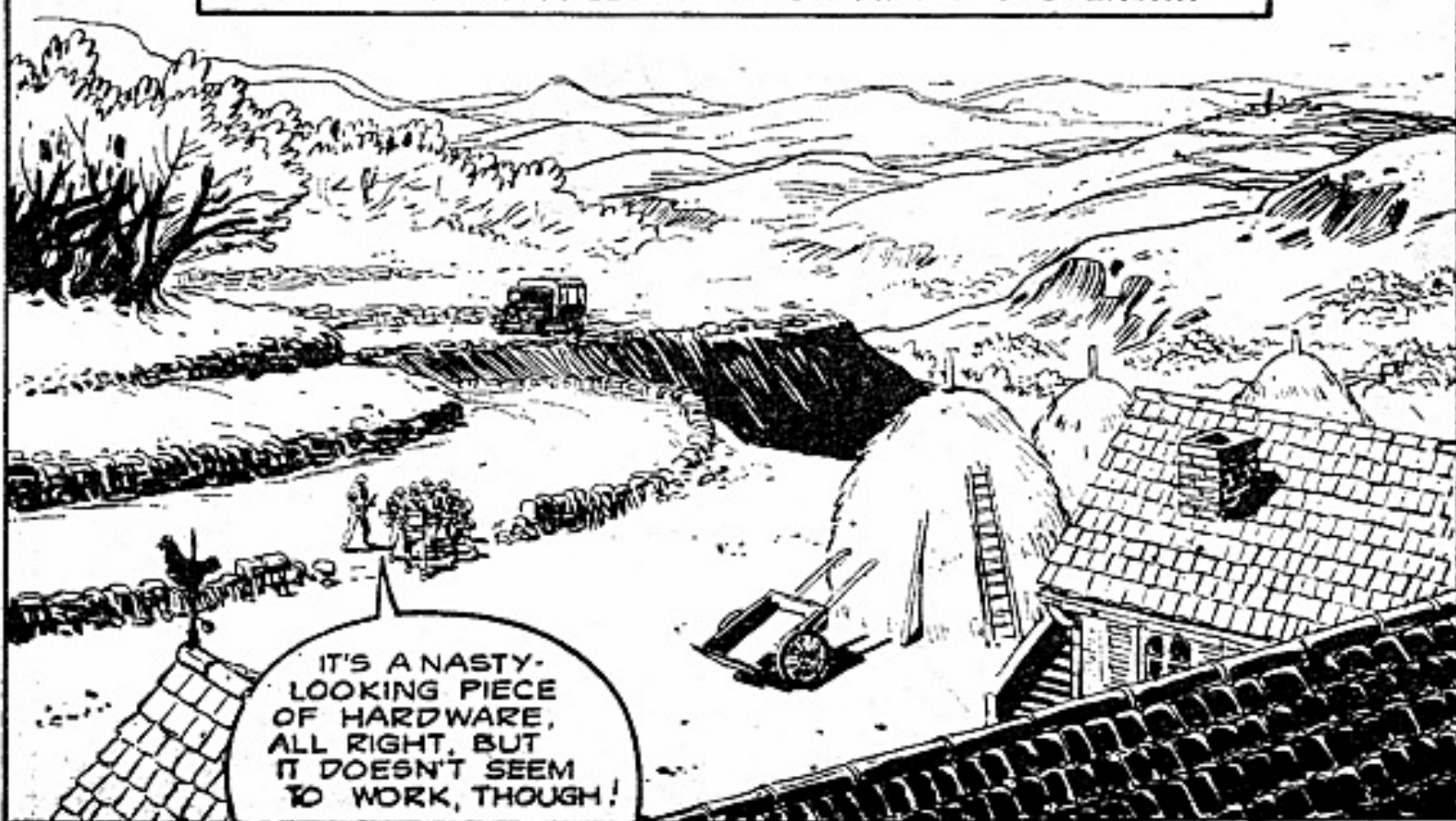


SOON, THE CHARGING BANSHIRES OVERPOWERED THE AMBUSH PARTY, AND THE STUTTERING MACHINE-GUNS LAPSED INTO SILENCE. SERGEANT DECKER SNATCHED UP A SCHMEISSER LYING ON THE GROUND...

I'LL HAVE THIS FOR A SOUVENIR!



THE PATROL CONTINUED ITS WEARY WAY BACK TO HEADQUARTERS. ON ARRIVING THERE, THE SERGEANT DECIDED TO HAVE A CLOSER LOOK AT HIS SOUVENIR...



AT THAT MOMENT, PINKY PULLED UP AT HIS DESTINATION. HIS BLOOD BEAT FASTER WHEN HE SAW THE GROUP OF SOLDIERS. HERE WERE SOME MEN WHO HAD OBVIOUSLY SEEN RECENT ACTION!

HALLO, THERE!
YOU BOYS
BEEN ON
PATROL?

THAT'S RIGHT,
CHUM! AND WE'VE
WON A PRIZE~
BUT IT WON'T
WORK!



EAGERLY, PINKY ASKED TO HAVE
A LOOK AT THE GUN...

IT SURE IS A BEAUTIFUL
WEAPON, SERGEANT.



SUDDENLY, HIS FINGER TOUCHED THE TRIGGER AND HE REELED BACK, OPEN-MOUTHED, AS THE SCHEISSER BURST INTO LIFE!

WHAT THE HECK...!

OH DEAR!
YOU DIDN'T
TELL ME IT
WAS LOADED!



SERGEANT 'TUG' WHELAN, DUTY N.C.O. AT HEADQUARTERS, BURST FROM THE OFFICE, WHISTLE-BLOWING AND STEN AT THE READY, THINKING THE GUNFIRE HERALDED A GERMAN ATTACK!

STAND-TO!
GENERAL
ALARM!

IT'S ALL
RIGHT, TUG!
JUST A LITTLE
SLIP-UP WITH
A SOUVENIR,
THAT'S ALL!



SERGEANT WHEELAN'S FACE REDDENED AND, WITH HEAVY STEPS, HE STRODE ANGRILY UP TO THE EMBARRASSED PINKY...

A LITTLE SLIP-UP, EH! THAT'S WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE TO ME, YOU SARDINE-SIZED SNIPPET! DON'T TELL ME YOU TOOK THAT SCHMEISSER FROM THE JERRIES YOURSELF...

NO, SARGE. I..ER..DIDN'T..



OF COURSE YOU DIDN'T! A PINT-SIZED MEMBER OF ALLEY SLOPER'S CAVALRY COULDN'T DO A THING LIKE THAT! WHERE'D YOU GET IT, THEN?

I GAVE IT TO HIM, TUG. I COULDN'T MAKE IT WORK, BUT HE PUT IT RIGHT IN A FLASH!



PINKY STOOD SPEECHLESS UNDER SERGEANT WHEELAN'S FURIOUS TONGUE-LASHING AND WILTED VISIBLY. SERGEANT DECKER, FEELING SORRY FOR THE TIMID DRIVER, DEFENDED HIM. ...

HE'S LUCKY I DON'T PUT HIM ON A FIZZER FOR UNAUTHORISED DISCHARGE OF FIREARMS!

LET HIM BE, TUG. IT WASN'T HIS FAULT!



THE ANGRY SERGEANT STORMED OFF AND THE HUMILIATED PINKY PROCEEDED TO UNLOAD. WITH GREAT RELIEF HE DROVE BACK TO BASE, WHEELAN'S WORDS STILL RINGING IN HIS EARS...

THE REST OF THE ARMY LOOKS DOWN ON US BLOKES..THEY RECKON WE'RE SOFT!



DURING THE FOLLOWING WEEKS, PINKY CONTINUED HIS SPECIAL RUNS TO BATTALION HEADQUARTERS. THE ALLIED ARMIES STEPPED UP THE PRESSURE, GRADUALLY FORCING THE GERMANS BACK TOWARDS CASSINO - THE GATEWAY TO ROME.



AS THE TENTH BANSHIRES INCHED SLOWLY FORWARD WITH THE ALLIED ARMIES, SO PINKY'S JOURNEY GREW LONGER EACH DAY. OVER THE WEEKS, THE MEN OF THE BATTALION HAD COME TO ACCEPT HIM AS A FRIEND - EXCEPT FOR WHEELAN.

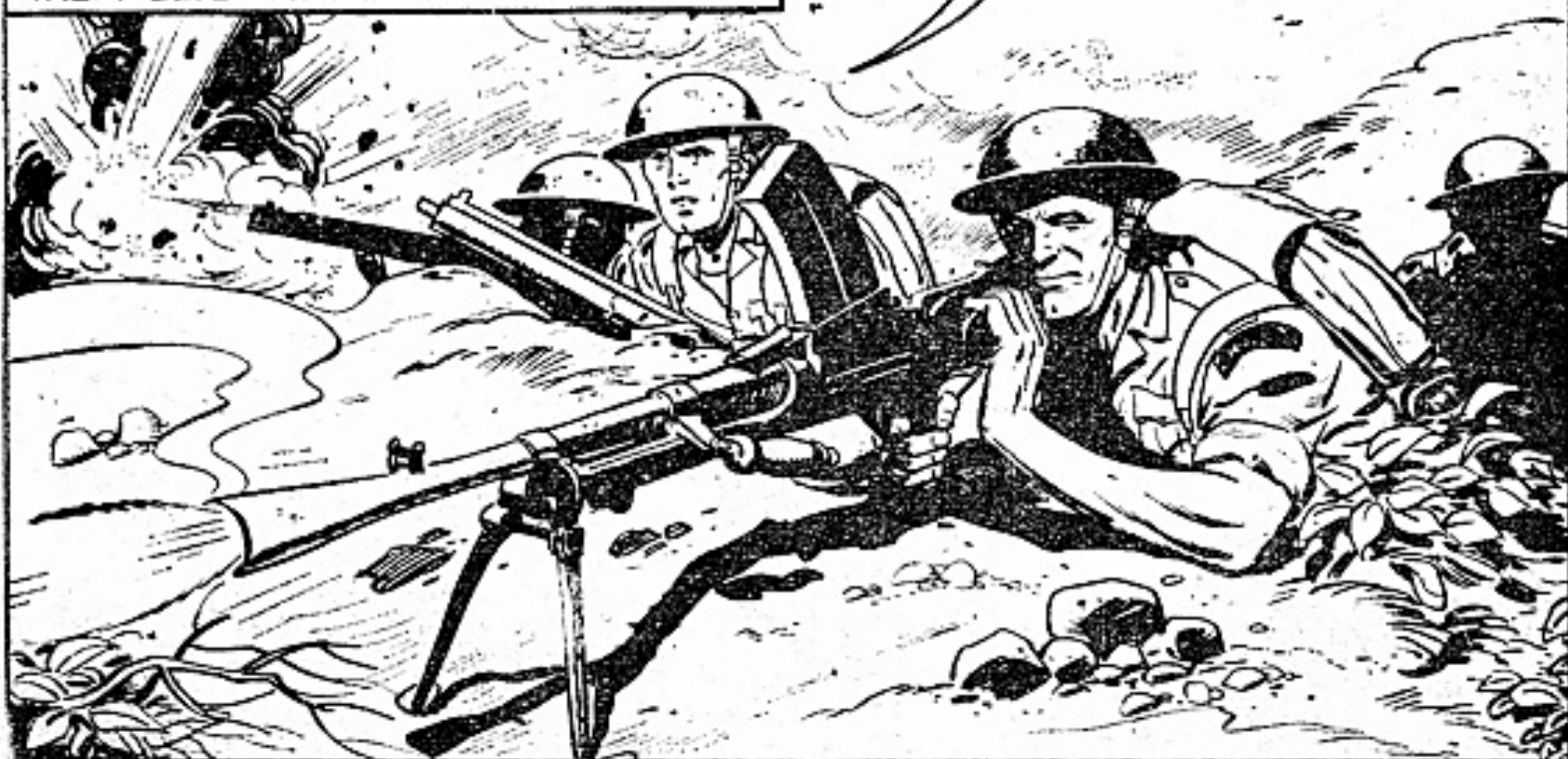
HALLO, PINKY!
ANY ROAST
CHICKEN FOR
US TODAY?

AFRAID
NOT, SERGEANT
DECKER. BUT I'VE
GOT A LETTER
FROM HOME
FOR YOU...



IN A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO HALT THE INEXORABLE ALLIED ADVANCE, THE GERMANS MOUNTED A FURIOUS COUNTER-ATTACK. WAVE AFTER WAVE OF SQUARE-HELMETED INFANTRY HURLED THEMSELVES AT THE BANSHIRES' POSITIONS.

PHEW! THIS IS GOING TO BE SOME SCRAP!



THE ENEMY BARRAGE INCREASED, HAMMERING DOWN ON THE SURPRISED BANSHIRES. AS A LAST VALIANT RESORT, THE BANSHIRE COMMANDING OFFICER ORDERED A BAYONET CHARGE...

FIX BAYONETS!
CHARGE!

HERE WE GO! BUT I DON'T RECKON WE'LL BE COMING BACK!



THE COURAGEOUS BANSHIRES HAD ONLY GONE A FEW YARDS WHEN WITHERING GERMAN FIRE CUT THEM DOWN LIKE CORN BEFORE A SCYTHE...



DAZEDLY, THE SURVIVORS OF THE STRICKEN BANSHIRES STAGGERED BACK FROM THE VICIOUS COUNTER-ASSAULT, HAULING THEIR WOUNDED AS BEST THEY COULD. SERGEANTS DECKER AND WHELAN RALLIED THE REMNANTS AND HEADED FOR A NEARBY VILLAGE.

IF WE CAN MAKE IT BACK TO THE VILLAGE, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO HOLD OUT FOR A DAY OR TWO... KEEP THE JERRIES TIED DOWN FOR A WHILE, TUG!



ON ARRIVING AT THE SMALL, DESERTED VILLAGE, BATTERED BY GERMAN SHELLS, SERGEANT DECKER MADE A CHECK ON THE MEN...



HAVING ATTENDED TO THE WOUNDED, THE TWO SERGEANTS SET UP DEFENSIVE POSITIONS IN THE VILLAGE...

THAT'S ABOUT IT! I'VE JUST RADIOED BRIGADE, ASKING FOR A SUPPLY DROP OR SOME REINFORCEMENTS!

PLANES WOULD HAVE A JOB TO CLEAR THESE MOUNTAINS AND DROP ACCURATELY. OUR BEST CHANCE IS TO TRY TO BREAK OUT FROM HERE AT NIGHT...



BACK AT BRIGADE H.Q., THE MESSAGE FROM THE BANSHIRES WAS RECEIVED WITH GLOOM. ALL ALONG THE LINE, THE GERMANS WERE ATTACKING FURIOUSLY. NO UNIT COULD BE SPARED TO RELIEVE THE BANSHIRES' SURVIVORS...

IF THOSE BOYS CAN HOLD ON FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS TILL THE HEAT TURNS OFF, WE COULD DO SOMETHING. BUT IT LOOKS GRIM FOR THEM!



THE NEWS OF THE BANSHIRES' DESPERATE FLIGHT SPREAD LIKE WILDFIRE THROUGH BRIGADE H.Q. PINKY HEARD IT BY CHANCE...

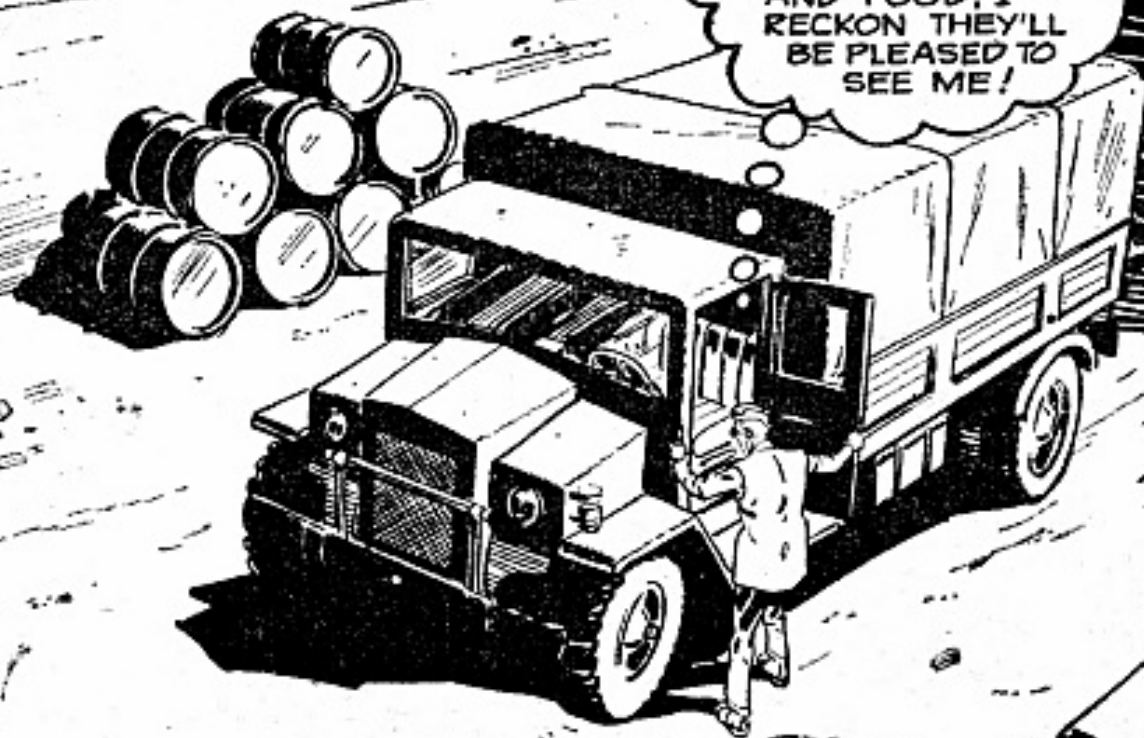
...THE JERRIES HAVE CUT OFF EVERY ROAD TO THE VILLAGE WITH ROAD BLOCKS! THOSE BANSHIRE BOYS REALLY ARE IN A SPOT!

SOME GOOD FRIENDS OF MINE ARE IN THAT LOT! MAYBE THERE'S SOMETHING I CAN DO TO HELP THEM!




WITHOUT HESITATION, PINKY RACED TO HIS LOADED TRUCK...

HERE I COME, BANSHIRES! WITH A FULL LOAD OF AMMO AND FOOD, I RECKON THEY'LL BE PLEASED TO SEE ME!




AS HE SPED TOWARDS THE DISTANT VILLAGE, PINKY COULD SEE THE SHELL-BURSTS OF THE WIDE-SPREAD BATTLE. FOR A MOMENT, HE FELT THE ICY TOUCH OF FEAR AND HE CONSIDERED TURNING BACK...



PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER, BARTON. YOU'VE GOT TO SHOW SERGEANT WHEELAN THAT ALLEY SLOPER'S CAVALRY IS AS GOOD AS ANY OTHER MOB IN THE ARMY.

SOON, HE WAS IN THE THICK OF THE BATTLE. WITH GRITTED TEETH, HE TORE THROUGH VILLAGE AFTER VILLAGE, AMIDST CRASHING SHELLS AND THE WHINING HUM OF SPLINTERED STEEL...



JIMINY!

THEN A SHELL EXPLODED JUST IN FRONT OF THE TRUCK, BRINGING IT TO A SUDDEN, JOLTING HALT.

WOW! THIS IS IT!



QUICKLY, PINKY JUMPED FROM THE CAB AND WITH SHAKING FINGERS, INSPECTED THE ENGINE. HIS FACE DROPPED...



CARBURETTOR...
DISTRIBUTOR...
BOTH GONE FOR A BURTON! CAN'T
DO ANYTHING
WITH THAT LOT!

Chapter 2. *Strange Steed!*

JUST AS PINKY LOOKED DESPONDENTLY AT THE RUINED ENGINE, A BREN CARRIER CLATTERED NOISILY PAST...

HEY, FELLERS!
PERHAPS YOU
CAN GIVE ME
A HAND!

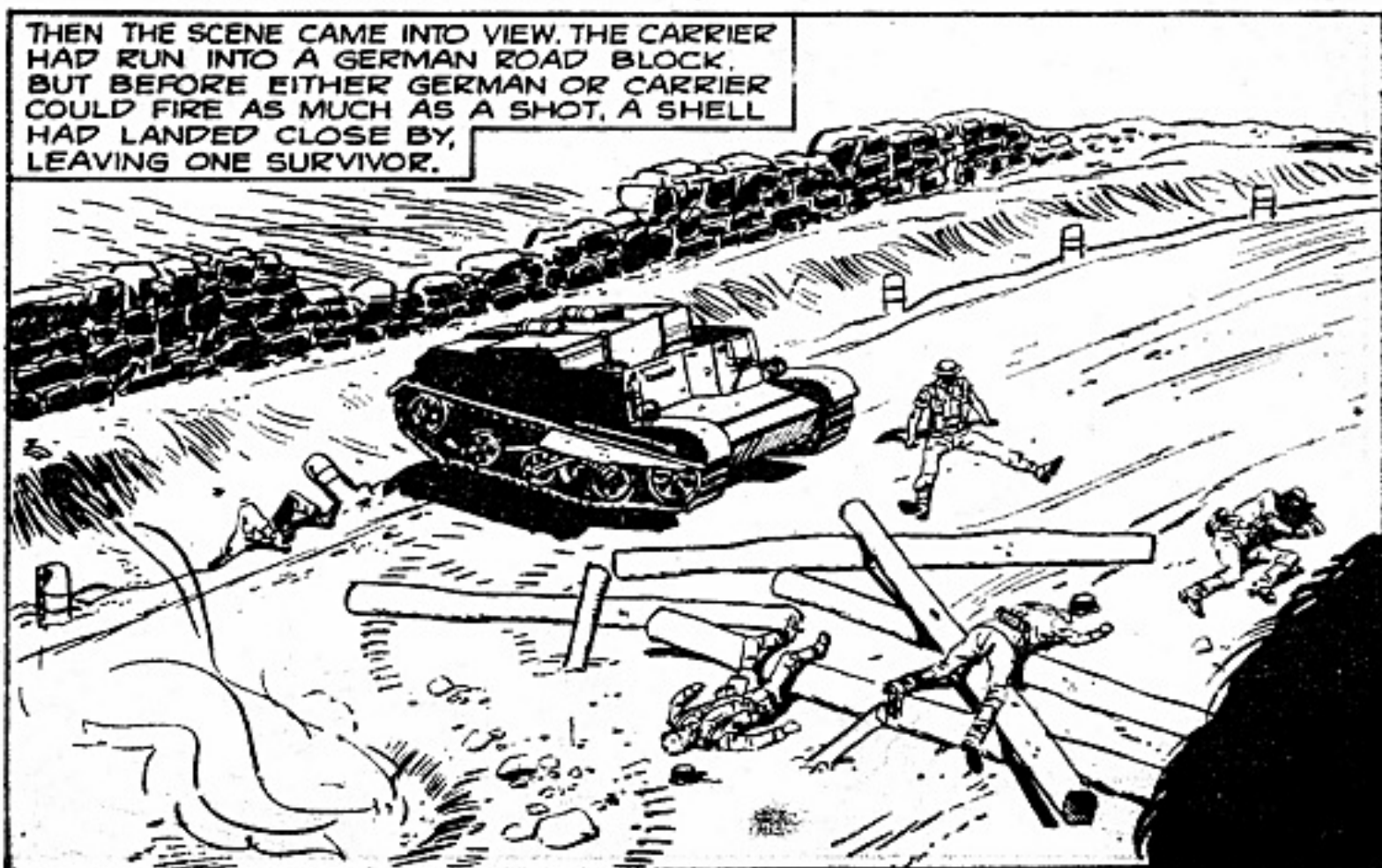
BUT ABOVE THE NOISE OF THEIR VEHICLE, NO-ONE HEARD HIM. BARELY HAD THE CARRIER DISAPPEARED AROUND THE CORNER THAN THE AIR WAS SPLIT BY A BLASTING EXPLOSION...

WHAT THE
HECK'S
HAPPENED?

SUDDENLY, THERE WAS COMPLETE SILENCE. GRABBING HIS RIFLE FROM THE CAB, PINKY CREPT CAUTIOUSLY ROUND THE SHOULDER OF THE HILL, HIS MOUTH DRY AND HIS HEART THROBBING...



THEN THE SCENE CAME INTO VIEW. THE CARRIER HAD RUN INTO A GERMAN ROAD BLOCK. BUT BEFORE EITHER GERMAN OR CARRIER COULD FIRE AS MUCH AS A SHOT, A SHELL HAD LANDED CLOSE BY, LEAVING ONE SURVIVOR.



PINKY BOUNDED DOWN THE SLOPE TOWARDS THE BADLY SHAKEN SOLDIER...

YOU ALL RIGHT, PAL?

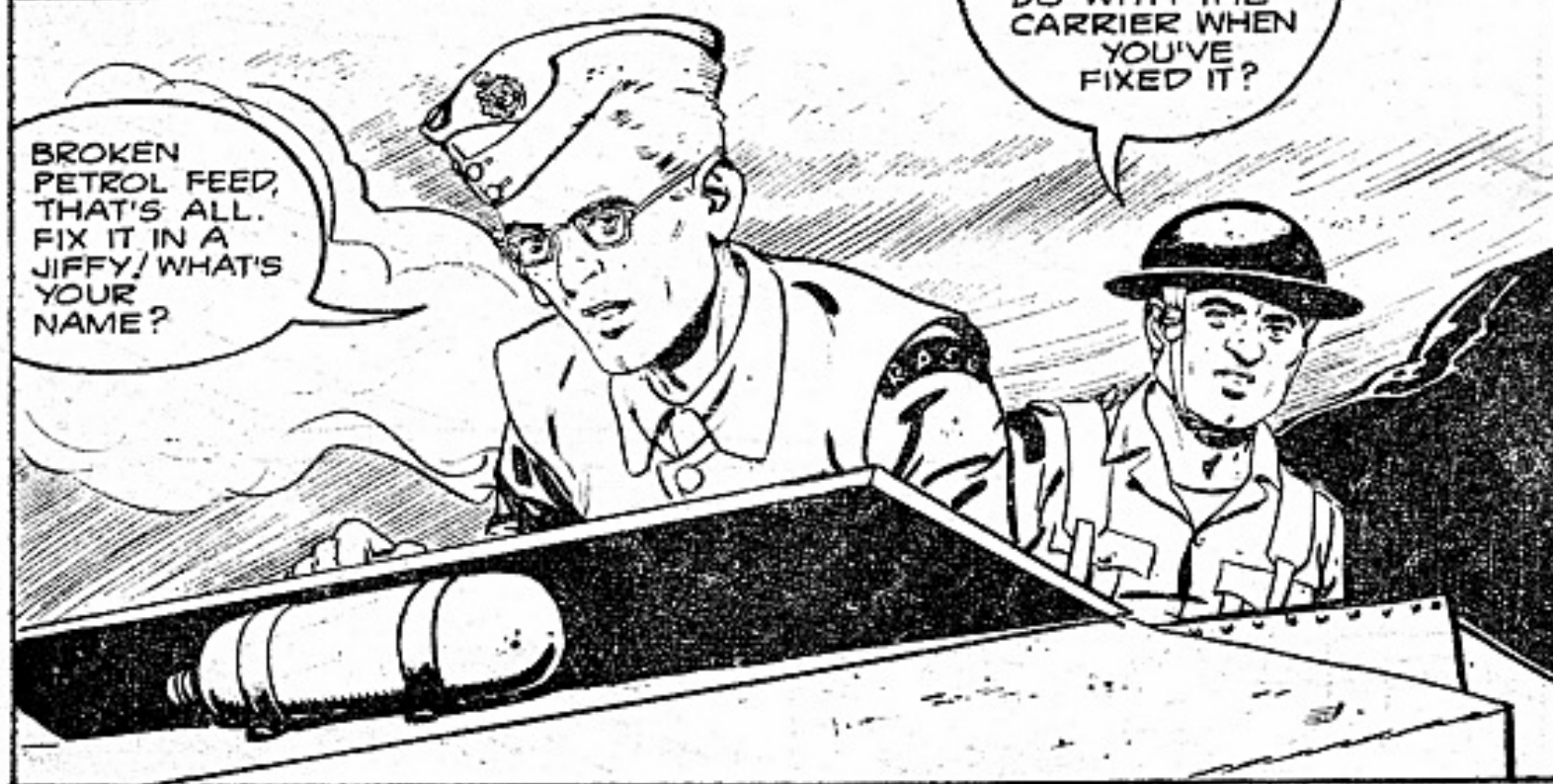
I - I THINK SO...



A PLAN FORMING IN HIS MIND, PINKY INSPECTED THE CARRIER. HE SIGHED WITH RELIEF ON FINDING IT ONLY SLIGHTLY DAMAGED...

BROKEN PETROL FEED, THAT'S ALL. FIX IT IN A JIFFY! WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

HARRIS - THEY CALL ME SLIM. BUT WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH THE CARRIER WHEN YOU'VE FIXED IT?



AS PINKY OUTLINED HIS PLAN, HARRIS LISTENED WITH GROWING ASTONISHMENT...

YOU WANT TO GET TO YOUR UNIT UP FRONT-AND I WANT TO DELIVER SUPPLIES TO THE BANSHIRES...SO, WE'LL SHARE THE CARRIER!

BROTHER, YOU MUST LIKE TROUBLE! BUT, I'M WITH YOU! LET'S GO!

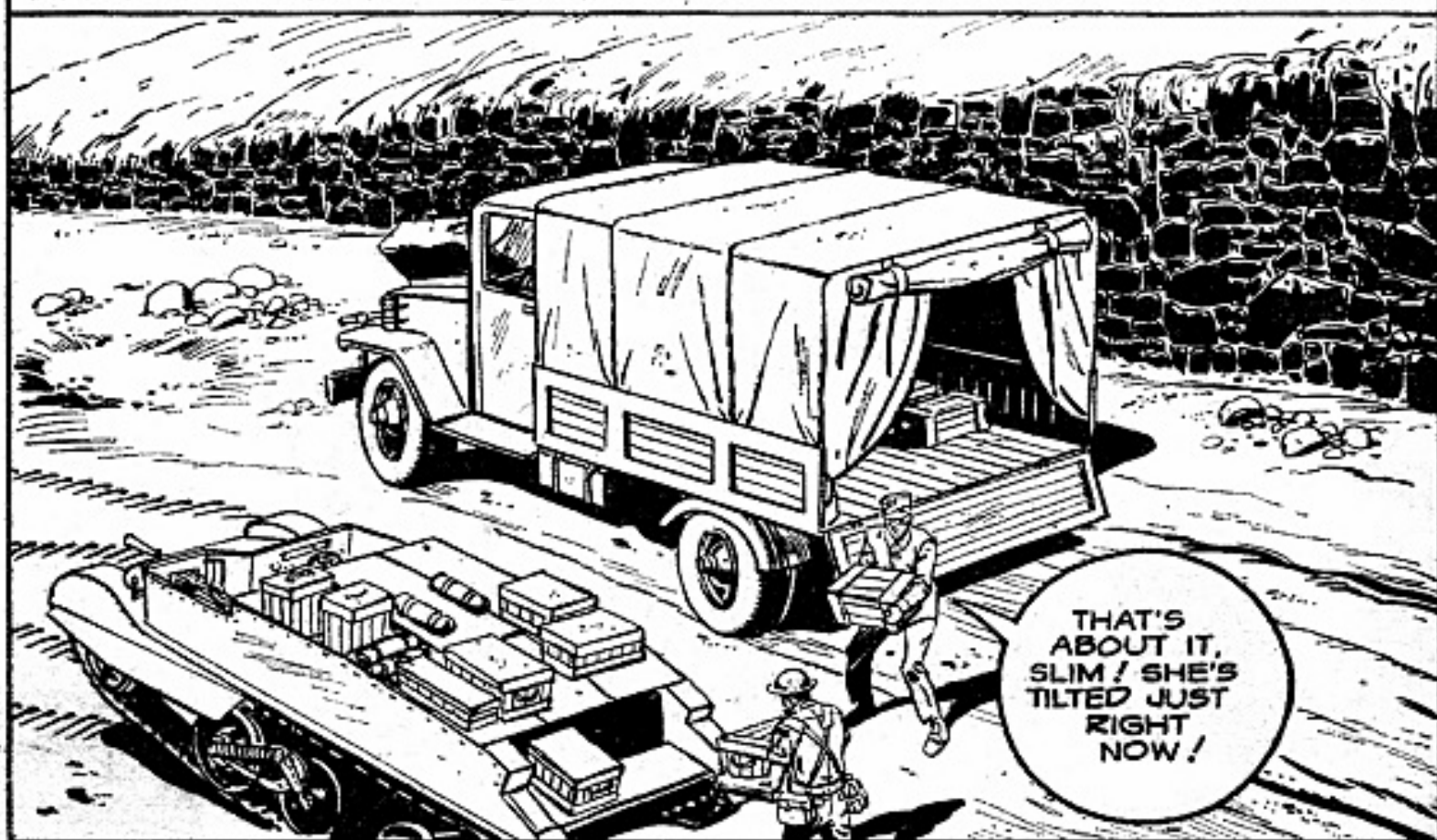


UNDER PINKY'S SKILFUL HANDS, THE CARRIER SOON ROARED INTO LIFE AND CLATTERED BACK DOWN THE ROAD TOWARDS THE DAMAGED TRUCK...

IF WE MEET UP WITH ANY ROAD BLOCKS, YOU KEEP THE FLANKING FIRE POINTS BUSY AND LEAVE THE ROAD-BLOCK TO ME.



TOGETHER, THE TWO BRITONS LABOURED AT TRANSFERRING THE MOST ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES FROM THE TRUCK TO THE CARRIER, BY PINKY'S INSTRUCTIONS MOST OF THEM WERE LOADED IN THE REAR OF THE CARRIER...



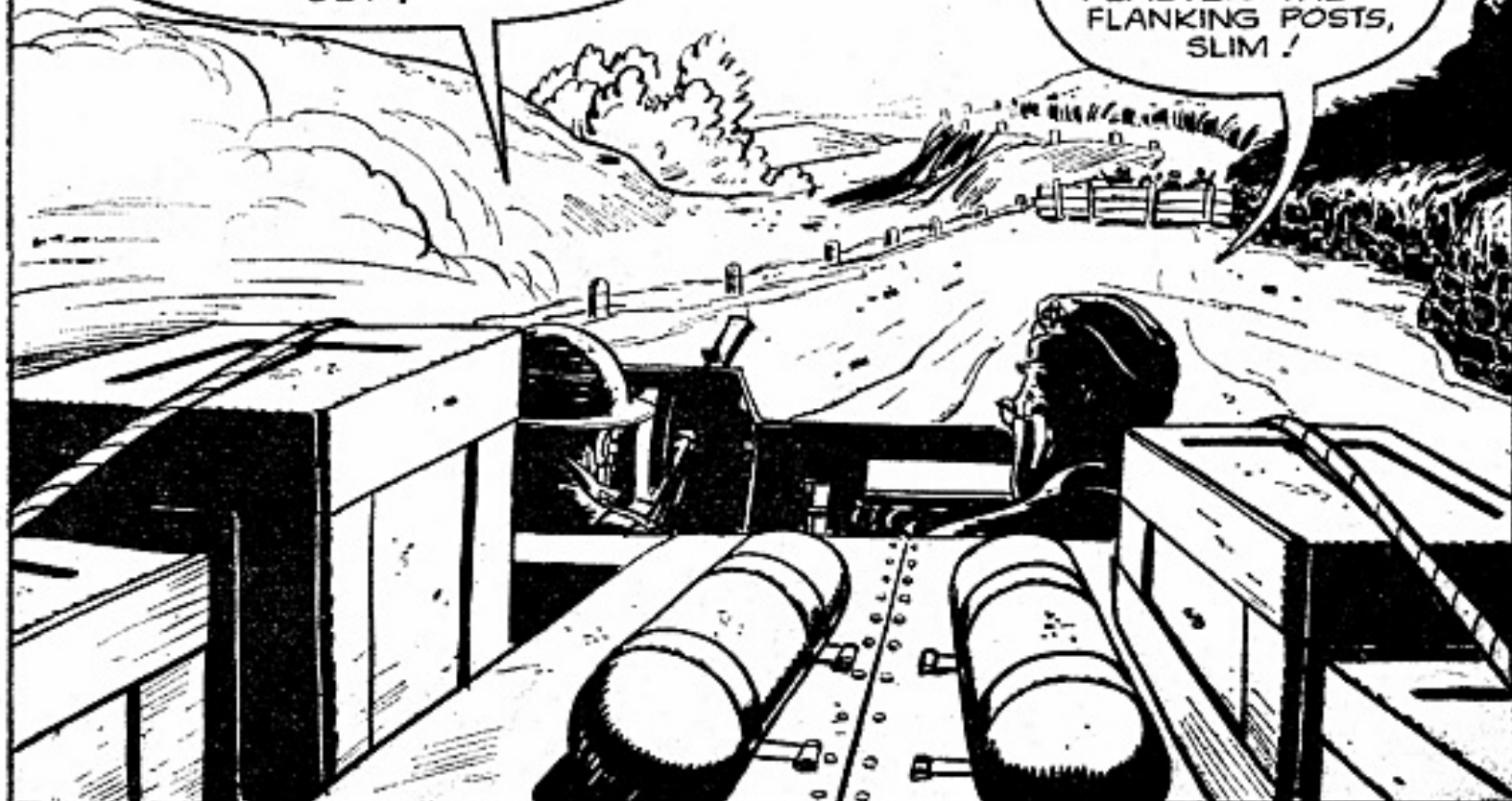
PINKY EASED THE DRIVING LEVERS FORWARD AND, SNORTING AND CLATTERING, THE CARRIER LURCHED ALONG THE ROAD...



FOR MANY MILES THE JOURNEY WAS UNEVENTFUL. THEN, AS THEY TURNED A SHARP CORNER, THEY RAN RIGHT INTO A GERMAN ROAD BLOCK...

HERE'S YOUR CHANCE, PINKY!
DRIVE STRAIGHT AT 'EM,
BOY!

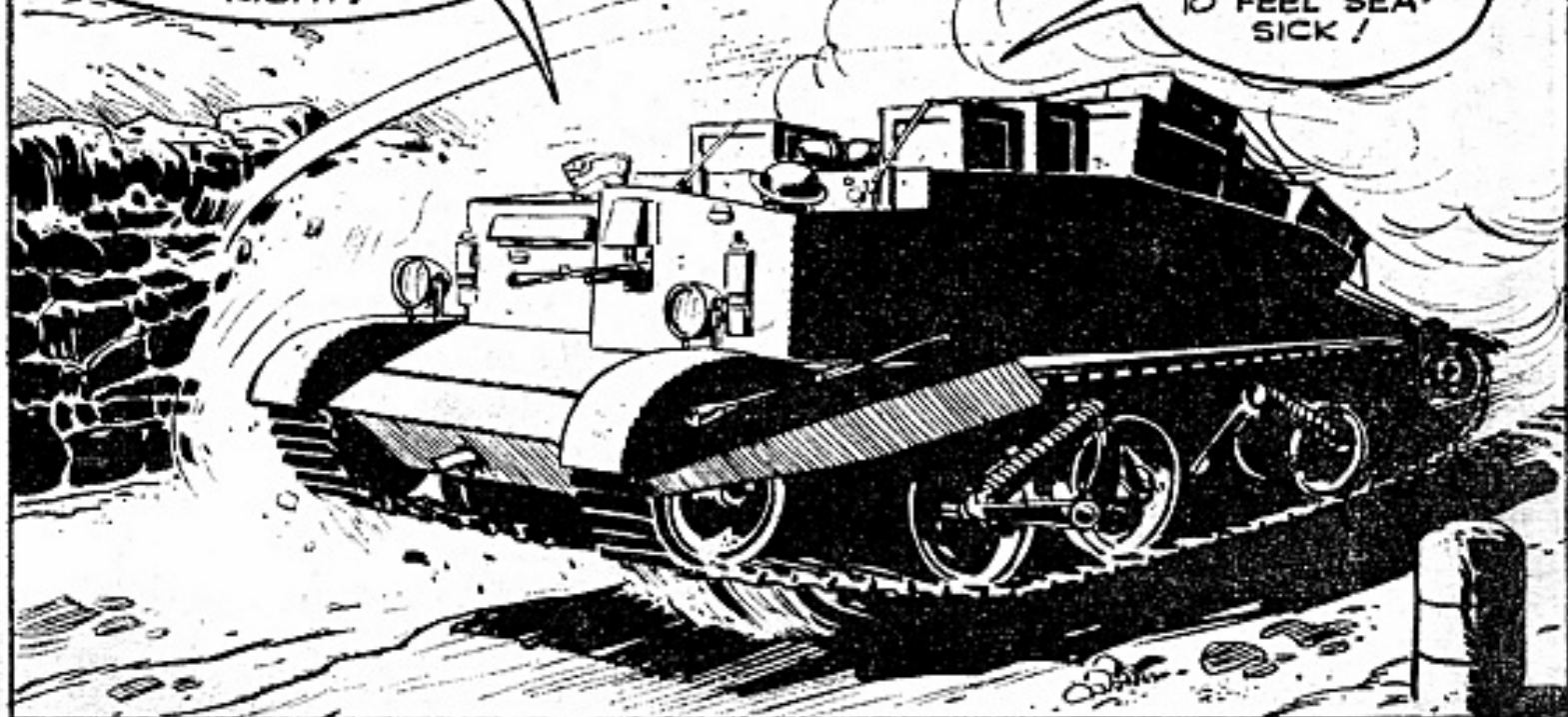
LET'S HOPE MY
SCHEME WORKS!
PLASTER THE
FLANKING POSTS,
SLIM!



AS THE CARRIER SKIMMED NOISILY UP THE ROAD TOWARDS THE BARRIER, PINKY JUGGLED WITH THE LEVERS AND SET THE CLUMSY VEHICLE'S NOSE ROCKING UP AND DOWN LIKE A SHIP AT SEA...

IT'S GOING WELL, SLIM. ALL I'VE GOT TO DO IS TIME THE UP-SWING RIGHT!

GET IT OVER, PINKY. I'M BEGINNING TO FEEL SEA-SICK!

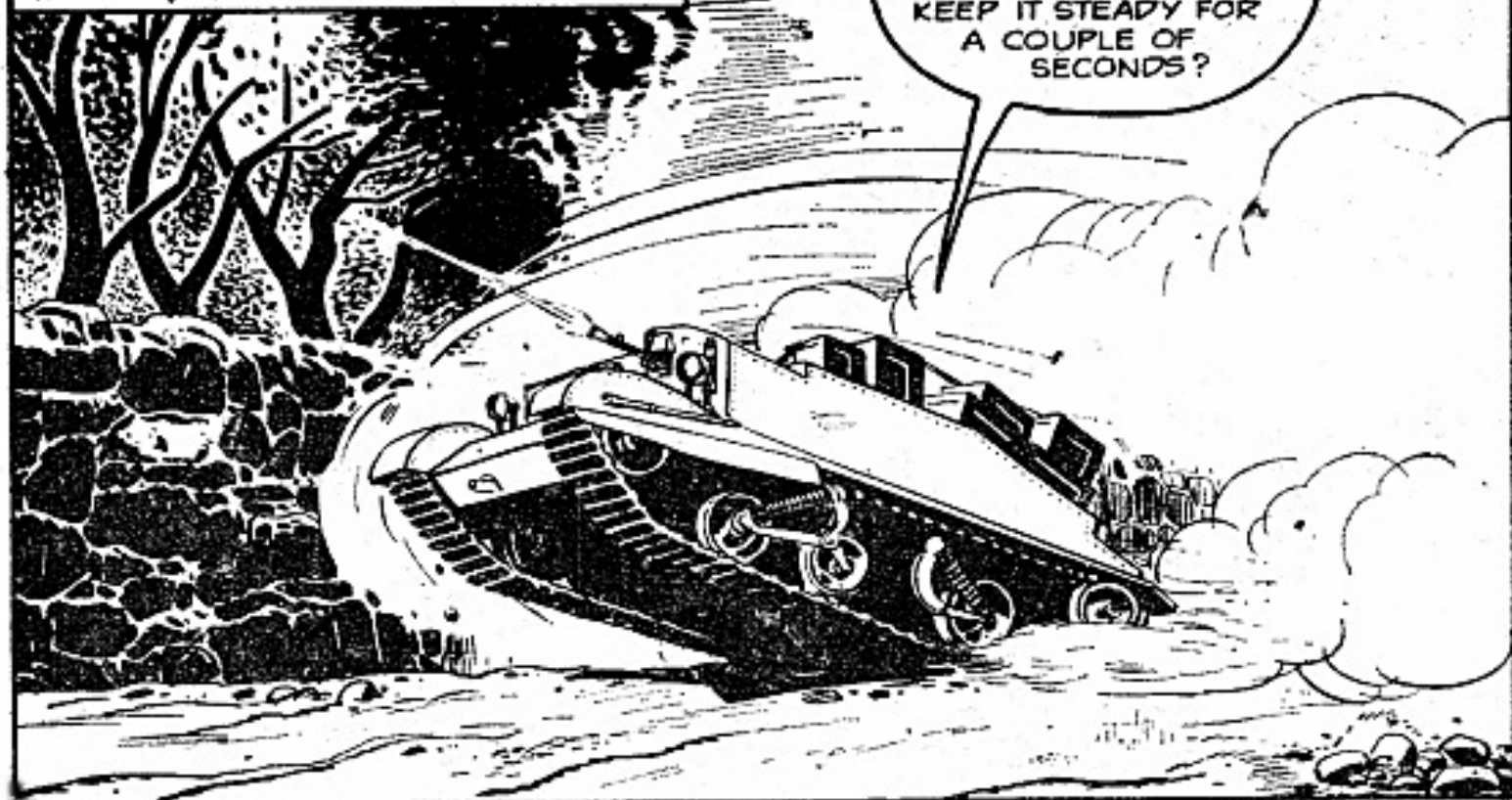


SEEING THE CARRIER HEADING FOR THEM AT FULL SPEED, THE GERMANS POURED A WITHERING BLAST OF LEAD AT IT...



WITH CLENCHED TEETH, SLIM TRIED TO HOSE THE FLANKING MACHINE-GUN... BUT EVERY TIME HE SQUEEZED THE TRIGGER, THE CARRIER LURCHED...

CAN'T HIT A THING WHILE YOU'RE JIGGING UP AND DOWN LIKE THIS, PINKY! CAN'T YOU KEEP IT STEADY FOR A COUPLE OF SECONDS?

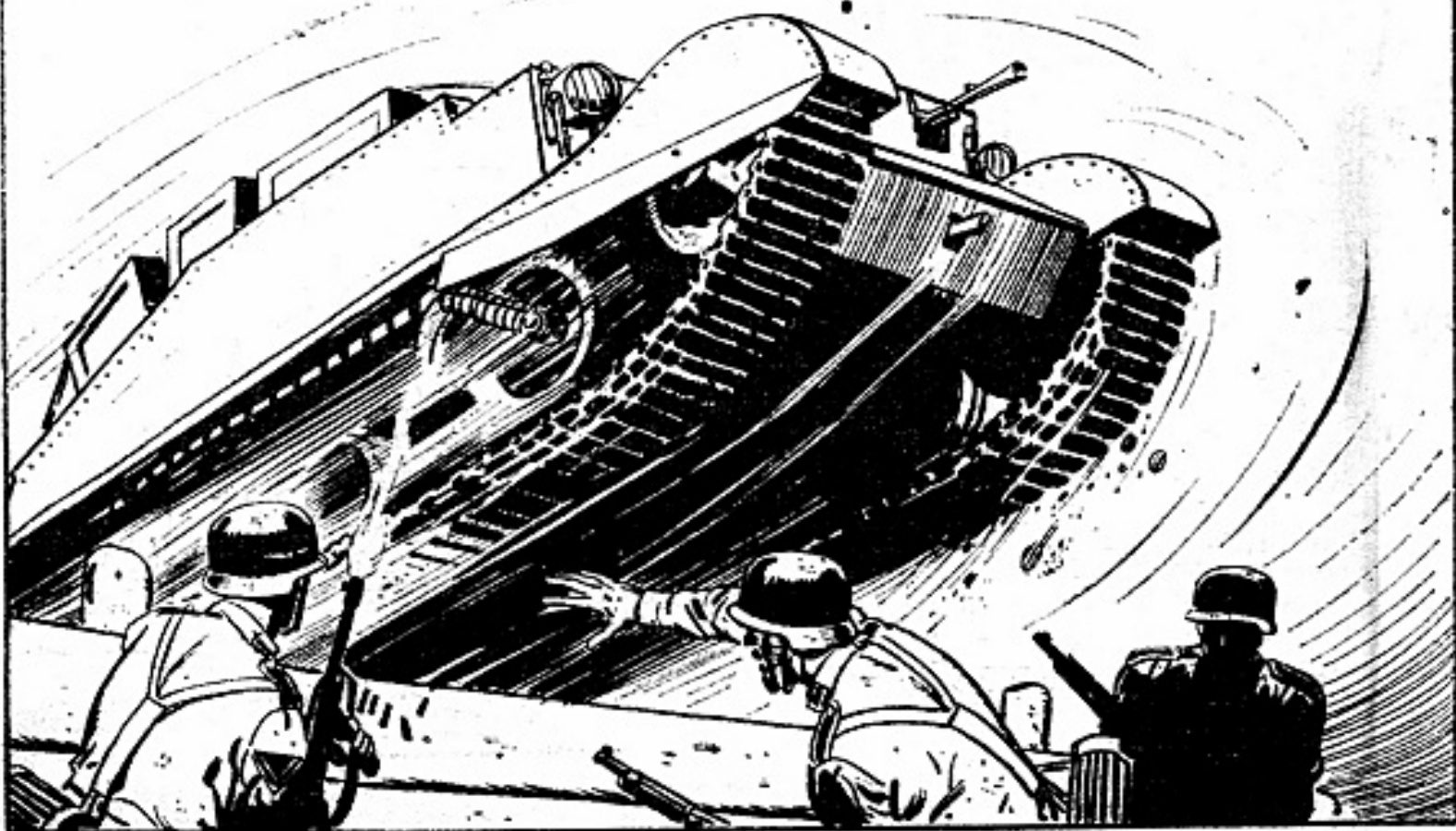


BUT NOTHING COULD STOP THE CARRIER NOW. WITH A TERRIFYING SHUDDER, IT ROSE, ALMOST VERTICAL, ABOVE THE ROAD BLOCK. AND THE PANIC-STRIKEN GERMANS...

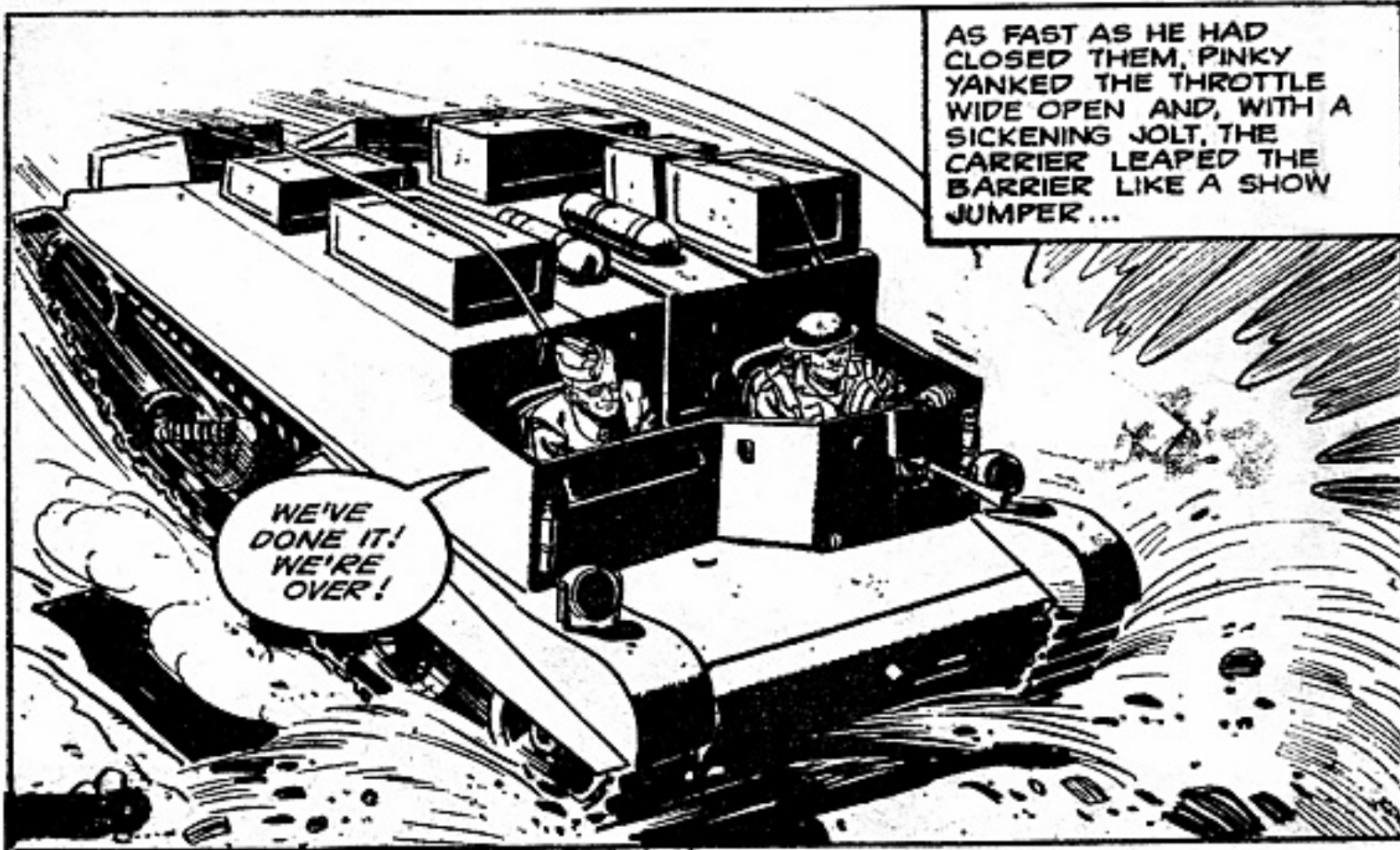
WELL
TIMED,
PINKY!



PINKY SLAMMED THE THROTTLE SHUT. SLOWLY, THE NOSE CAME DOWN, THE STEEL TRACKS CRUNCHING ON THE WOODEN BARRIER, WHILE THE GERMANS SCATTERED IN PANIC...



AS FAST AS HE HAD CLOSED THEM, PINKY YANKED THE THROTTLE WIDE OPEN AND, WITH A SICKENING JOLT, THE CARRIER LEAPED THE BARRIER LIKE A SHOW JUMPER...



WITH INCREASING SPEED, THE CLANKING CARRIER LEFT THE OPEN-MOUTHED GERMANS AND ROARED OUT OF SIGHT. FOR MILE AFTER MILE, PINKY PUSHED IT AT TOP SPEED...



NEXT MOMENT A SQUAT SHAPE LOOMED UP ON THE ROAD AHEAD. IT WAS A LOADED TROOP-CARRYING LORRY - AND EVEN FROM THAT DISTANCE, PINKY COULD SEE IT WAS A GERMAN VEHICLE...



WITH A SNARLING STUTTER, A SPANDAU MOUNTED ON THE GERMAN TRUCK SPAT AT THE ONCOMING CARRIER...

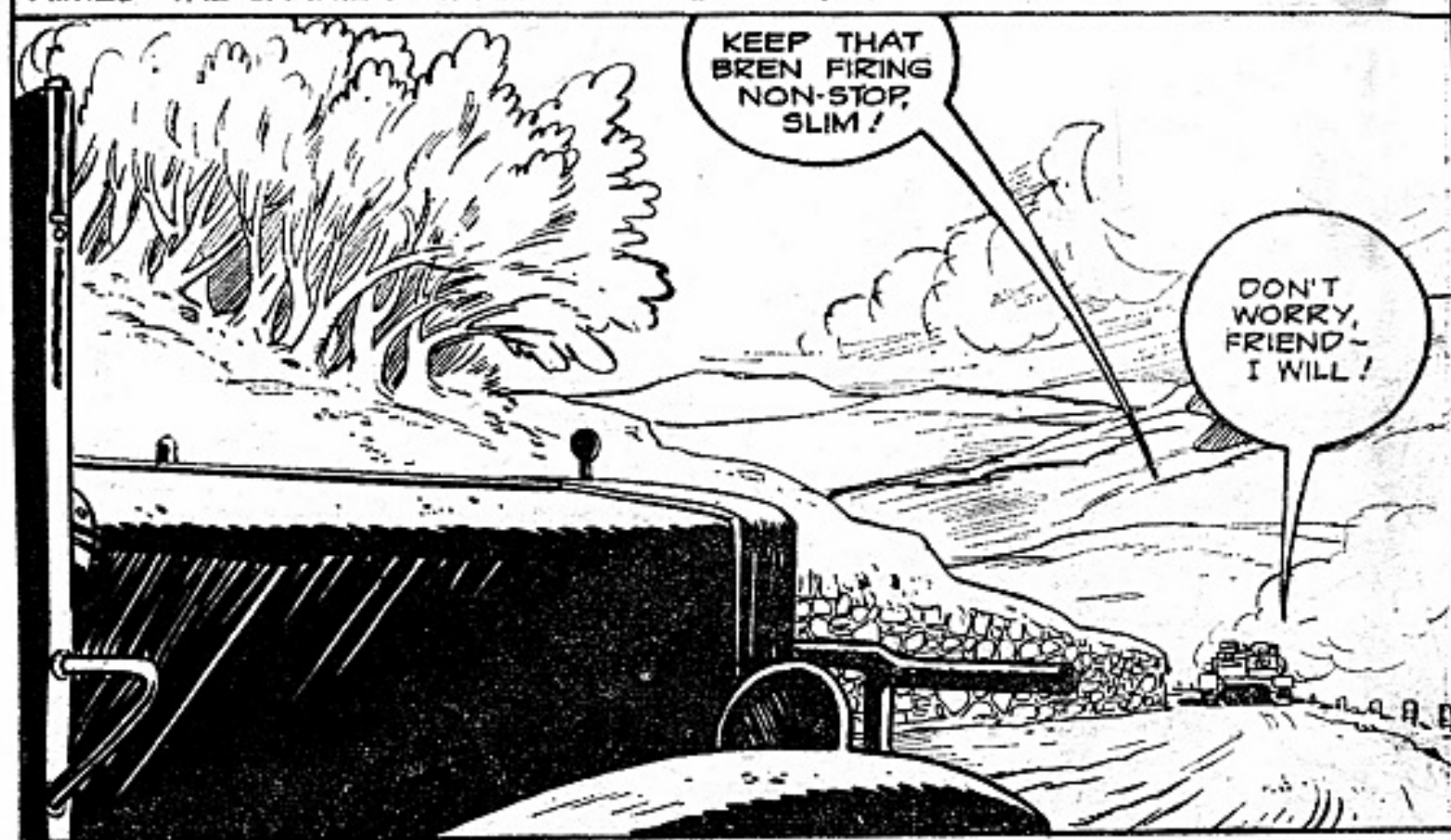
A BRITISH BABY TANK / KNOCK ITS TRACKS OFF!



AS SLIM FIRED THE BREN, PINKY SLAMMED THE THROTTLES WIDE OPEN AND AIMED THE CARRIER STRAIGHT AT THE LORRY...

KEEP THAT BREN FIRING NON-STOP, SLIM!

DON'T WORRY, FRIEND - I WILL!



THE TWO VEHICLES RUSHED AT EACH OTHER WITH GUNS BLAZING, BULLETS WHINING AS THEY RICOCHETED FROM METAL PLATING...

HOLD ON,
SLIM...WE'RE
GOING TO
BUMP 'EM!

PINKY STEERED DELIBERATELY FOR THE NARROW GAP BETWEEN THE GERMAN TRUCK AND THE WALL OF ROCK..



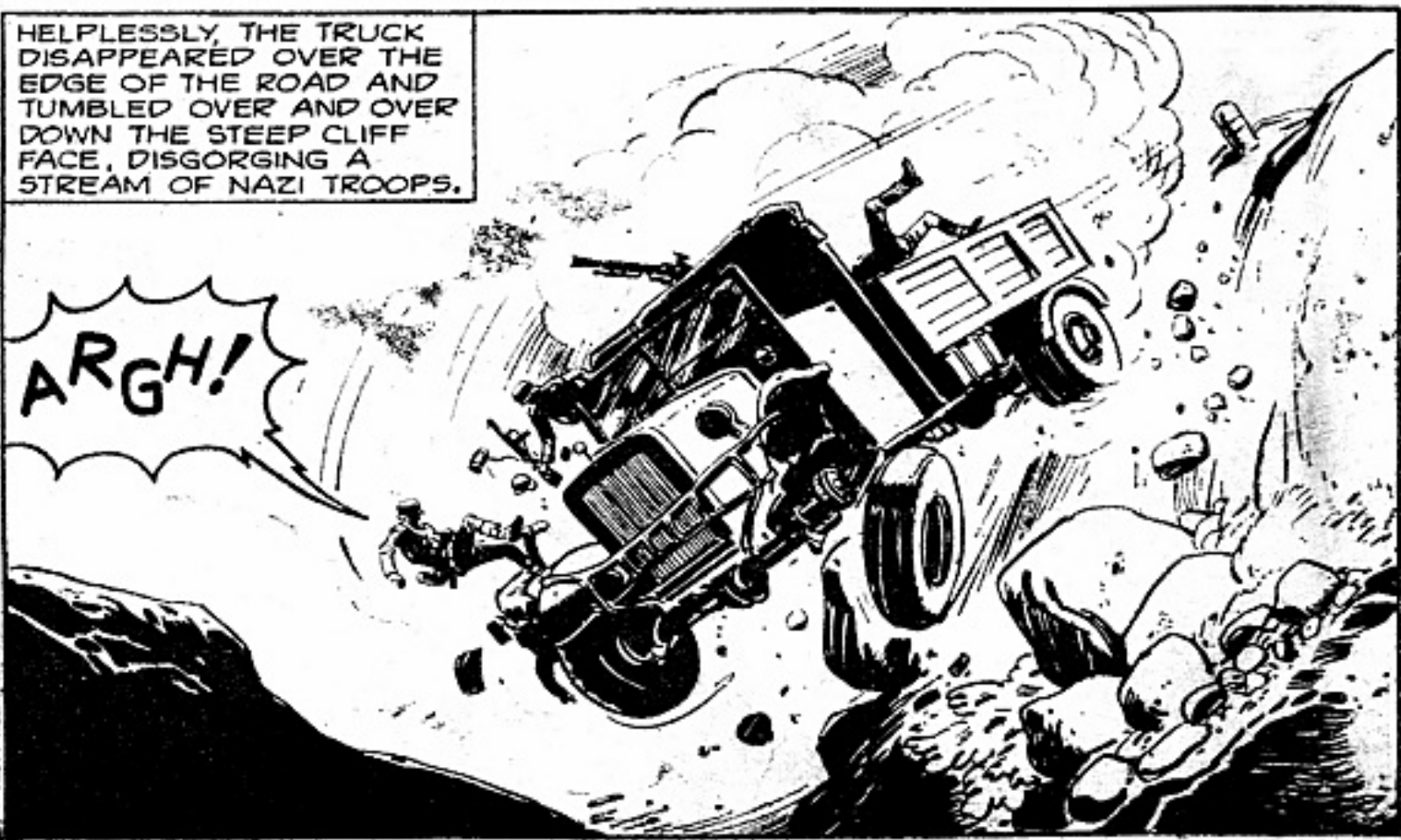
WITH A RENDING CRASH AND A VIOLENT, WRENCHING JOLT, THE SOLID STEEL OF THE CARRIER SMASHED INTO THE SIDE OF THE TRUCK, KNOCKING IT OFF THE ROAD...

ACH!
HIMMEL!



HELPLESSLY, THE TRUCK DISAPPEARED OVER THE EDGE OF THE ROAD AND TUMBLED OVER AND OVER DOWN THE STEEP CLIFF FACE, DISGORGING A STREAM OF NAZI TROOPS.

ARGH!



THE STURDY BREN-CARRIER LURCHED AND DUG ITS TAIL INTO THE WALL, LEAVING A TRAIL OF SIZZLING SPARKS AND BROKEN ROCK. THEN, UNDER PINKY'S SKILFUL HANDS, IT PULLED AWAY AND TRUNDLED ON...

THAT'S
PUT PAID
TO THEM!

AS I WAS SAYING, PINKY, YOU'RE
THE BEST DRIVER BAR NONE
THAT I'VE EVER
COME ACROSS!



AS THE CLUMSY LITTLE
VEHICLE RUMBLED ON
ITS WAY, PINKY FELT
A GLOW OF PRIDE
REPLACING THE ICY
PANGS OF TERROR
THAT HAD GRIPPED
HIM A FEW SECONDS
BEFORE. AT LAST
HE HAD STRUCK A
DIRECT BLOW AT
THE ENEMY!

THANKS, SLIM...
THAT'S REAL
NICE OF YOU!



Chapter 3. *Village of Vengeance!*

AHEAD, AT THE BATTERED VILLAGE IN THE HILLS, THE BATTLE-WEARY REMNANTS OF THE BANSHIRES WERE FIGHTING FIERCELY TO HOLD OFF THE ATTACKING GERMANS...

AT THIS RATE OF FIRE, WE'VE AMMO LEFT FOR ABOUT TEN MINUTES!



SERGEANT DECKER'S HOPES FELL EVEN MORE WHEN A PALE-FACED LOOKOUT RAN FROM HIS POSITION TO REPORT TO HIM...

SERGEANT! THERE'S A TANK COMING ROUND THE HILL! I CAN HEAR IT RUMBLING!

WE WON'T LAST TEN SECONDS AGAINST A TANK!



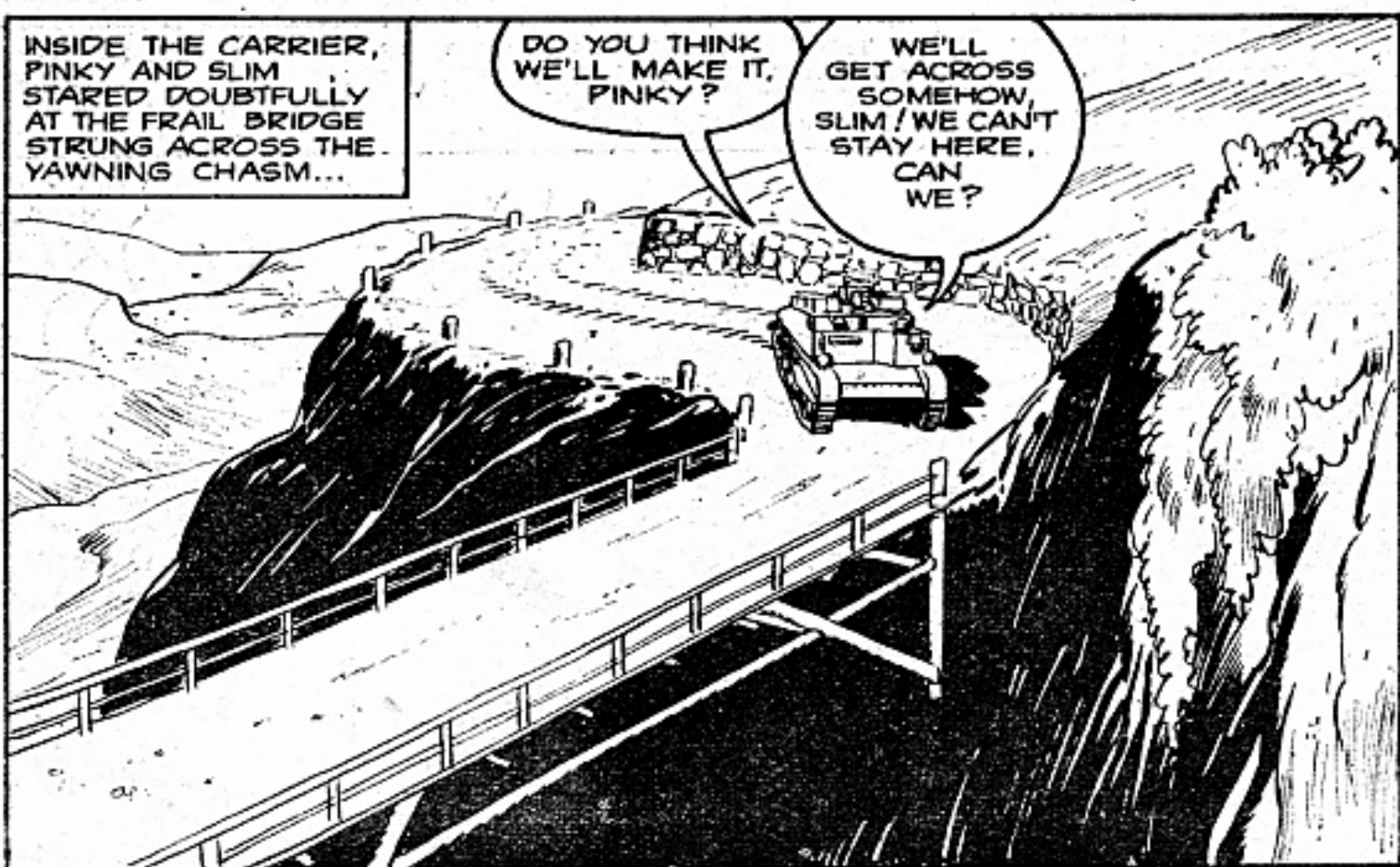
WITH QUICK STEPS, THE TWO SERGEANTS FOLLOWED THE LOOK-OUT BACK TO HIS POSITION. THEIR STRAINED FACES RELAXED INTO HOPEFUL GRINS WHEN THEY SAW THE CAUSE OF THE RUMBLING...

IT'S A
BREN CARRIER!
BRIGADE MUST
HAVE SENT SOME
HELP, AFTER
ALL!

INSIDE THE CARRIER, PINKY AND SLIM STARED DOUBTFULLY AT THE FRAIL BRIDGE STRUNG ACROSS THE YAWNING CHASM...

DO YOU THINK
WE'LL MAKE IT,
PINKY?

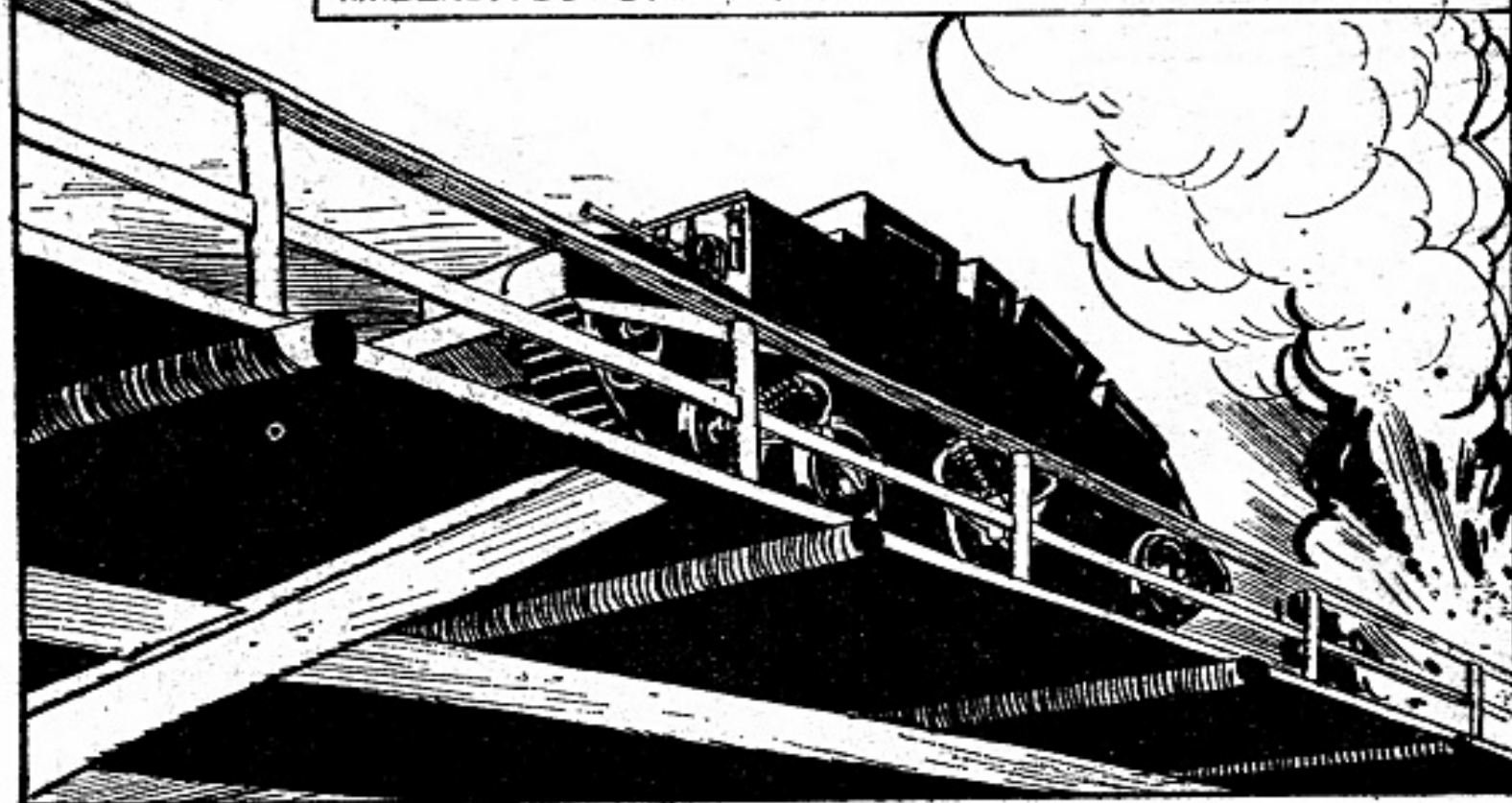
WE'LL
GET ACROSS
SOMEHOW,
SLIM! WE CAN'T
STAY HERE.
CAN
WE?



BY NOW, THE GERMANS HAD SPOTTED THE CARRIER. AMIDST A CURTAIN OF SCREAMING STEEL, THE LUMBERING CARRIER RUMBLING CAREFULLY OVER THE FIRST FEW YARDS OF THE NARROW BRIDGE...



PINKY KNEW THAT A FAST DASH ACROSS THE BRIDGE WOULD BE TOO MUCH FOR THE FRAIL SUPPORTS. HE STEELLED HIMSELF TO GRIND THE CARRIER SLOWLY ACROSS THE CREAKING TIMBERS. FOOT BY FOOT, THEY DREW CLOSER TO SAFETY...

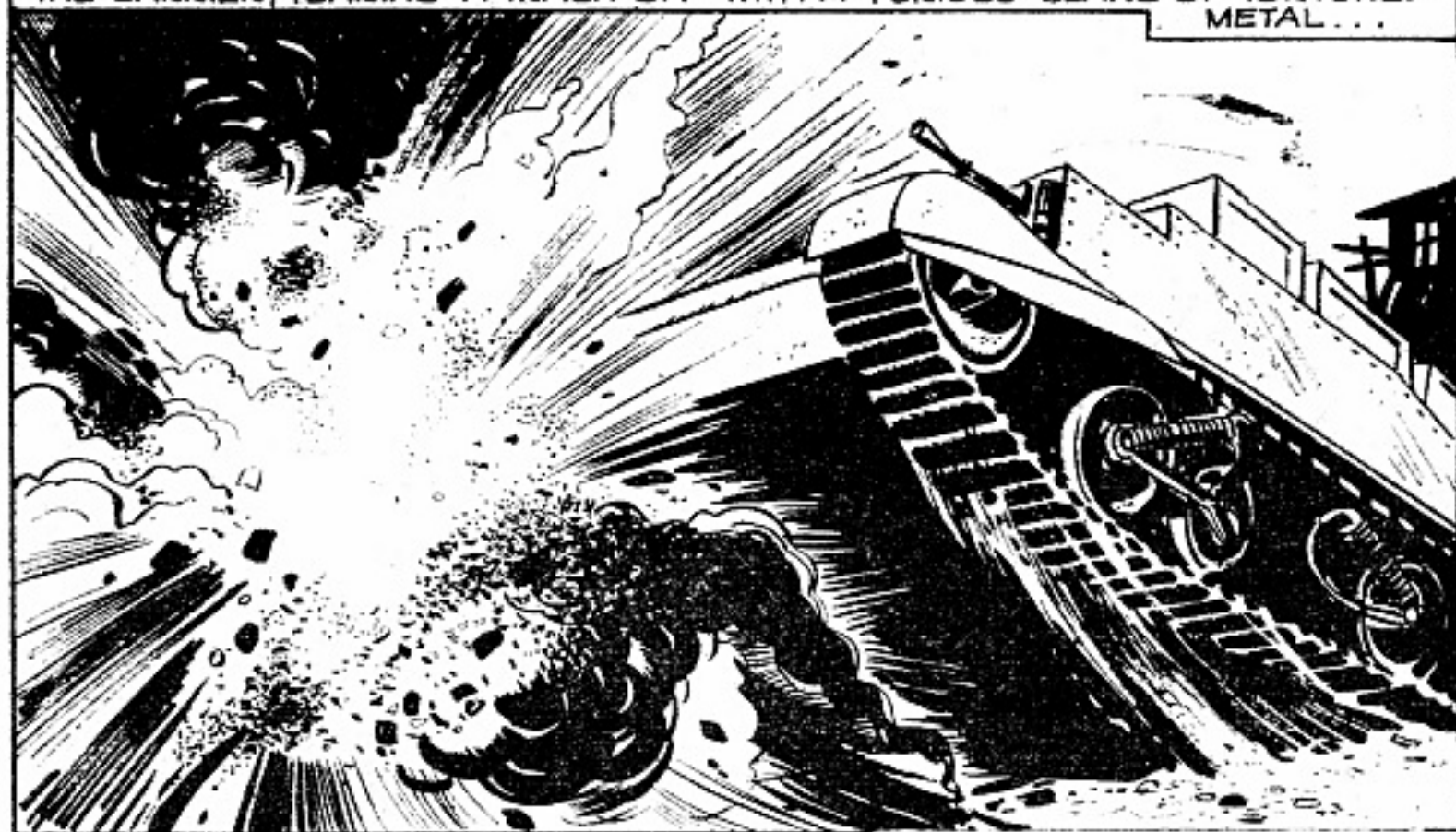


AT LAST THE NERVE-WRACKING DRIVE WAS OVER. PINKY ACCELERATED AND THE CARRIER ROARED TOWARDS THE VILLAGE AT TOP SPEED. ANGRILY, THE ENEMY INCREASED THEIR BARRAGE...

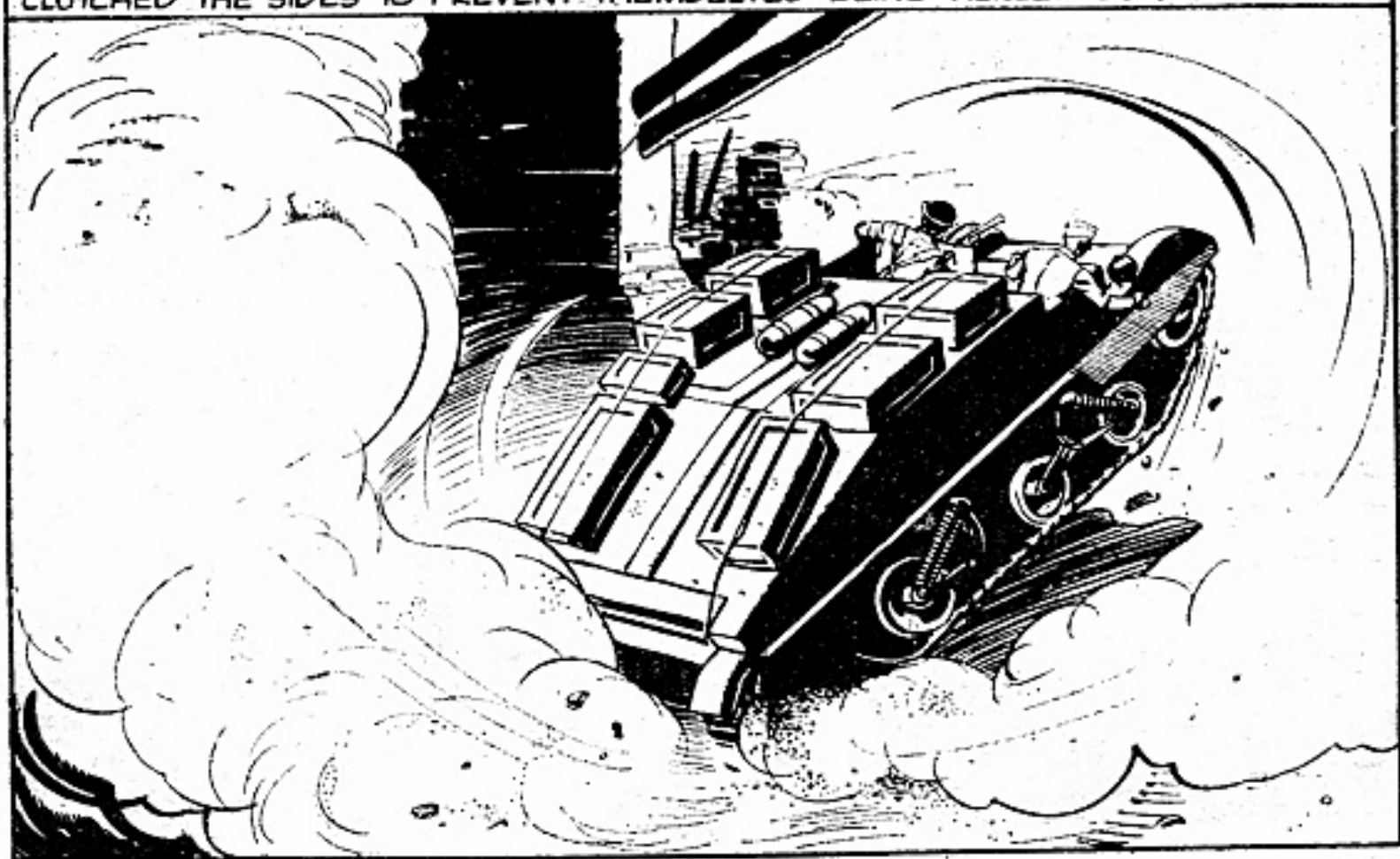
YOU CAN OPEN YOUR EYES NOW,
SLIM. WE'RE OVER!



THEN, WITHIN YARDS OF THE BANSHIRES' POSITIONS, A SHELL EXPLODED BEFORE THE CARRIER, TEARING A TRACK OFF WITH A FURIOUS CLANG OF TORTURED METAL...



THE STRICKEN CARRIER SPUN ROUND LIKE A TOP. WHITE-FACED, PINKY AND SLIM CLUTCHED THE SIDES TO PREVENT THEMSELVES BEING HURLED OUT...



WITH A SUDDEN BONE-SHAKING JOLT, THE CARRIER RAMMED INTO THE WALL OF THE HOUSE SHELTERING THE BANSHIRES. IT WAS THE END OF THE LINE!

THERE'S FOOD AND AMMO IN THE CARRIER FOR YOU, FELLERS! HAD A BIT OF A JOB GETTING IT HERE!

IT'S PINKY! WELL DONE, PAL!



SERGEANT DECKER HAD WATCHED WITH BATED BREATH AS PINKY HAD MADE THE TERRIFYING BRIDGE CROSSING. HIS WORDS OF PRAISE EMBARRASSED PINKY...

YOU MUST HAVE EYES IN YOUR FINGERS TO DRIVE LIKE THAT, PINKY! AND ANY GUY WHO'LL TAKE THAT SORT OF CHANCE MUST HAVE NERVES LIKE STEEL!



WHY..THANKS, SARGE!
IT..IT WAS NOTHING
REALLY!



PINKY STIFFENED AS HE SAW A STERN FIGURE STORMING TOWARDS HIM... IT WAS SERGEANT WHEELAN!

OH, NO! WHO BROUGHT THIS NUMBSKULL HERE TO MESS THINGS UP? WE'RE IN ENOUGH TROUBLE ALREADY -WITHOUT HIM!

GO
EASY, TUG! PINKY'S
JUST BROUGHT US
A LOAD OF
AMMO!



BUT NOTHING
PINKY DID
WOULD EARN
PRAISE FROM
SERGEANT
WHEELAN...

OKAY! OKAY! SO
HE'S BROUGHT
SOME AMMO/THAT'S
HIS JOB, ISN'T
IT?



PINKY'S NEW-FOUND
CONFIDENCE SWIFTLY
EVAPORATED BEFORE
WHEELAN'S WITHERING
SCORN...

OKAY, TUG-FORGET PINKY.
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO
DO ABOUT THAT JERRY
MACHINE-GUN IN THAT
PILE OF BOULDERS?
IT'S CUTTING US UP
BADLY!

WE'LL TRY A
RAIDING PARTY
TONIGHT-IF WE
CAN MUSTER
ENOUGH
MEN!



AS THE TWO SERGEANTS PLANNED THE ATTACK, PINKY WRACKED HIS BRAINS FOR SOME WAY TO PROVE TO WHEELAN THAT HE WAS NOT SO TIMID AS HE LOOKED...

WE'LL BE LUCKY IF WE
CAN PARADE SIX FIT MEN,
TUG!

MAYBE
THIS IS MY
CHANCE!



PINKY SUMMONED UP ALL HIS COURAGE AND
SPOKE TO SERGEANT DECKER...

CAN I JOIN THE
RAIDING PARTY
TONIGHT, SARGE?
I DID MY BASIC
INFANTRY TRAINING
— I KNOW WHAT
TO DO!



BUT SERGEANT WHEELAN WAS NOT AGREEABLE... ANGRILY, HE PROTESTED...

SURELY WE CAN
FIND ENOUGH
MEN WITHOUT
TAKING THAT
LITTLE CLOWN
ALONG!

THERE'S NO ONE ELSE,
TUG! AND WHAT'S THE
FUSS, ANYWAY? HE'S AS
TOUGH AS ANY MAN.
LOOK WHAT HE WENT
THROUGH TO GET THE
AMMO HERE!



SERGEANT WHEELAN RELUCTANTLY AGREED TO PINKY JOINING THE RAIDING PARTY. THAT NIGHT, THEY CREPT STEALTHILY FROM THEIR SHELTER...

OKAY, BARTON, WE'RE LUMBERED
WITH YOU-CARRY THE VEREY
PISTOL. FIRE IT WHEN I SAY SO,
AND NOT BEFORE!



ONCE AGAIN, PINKY FELT HIS CONFIDENCE EBBING AS WHEELAN STUNG HIM WITH SARCASTIC BITTERNESS...

THEY'RE SIMPLE ENOUGH ORDERS, BARTON. I SUPPOSE IT'S TOO MUCH TO HOPE YOU'LL CARRY THEM OUT!



PINKY WAS ALREADY NERVOUS, AND HIS ENCOUNTER WITH WHEELAN HAD UNSETTLED HIM EVEN MORE. HE FUMBLING HIS WAY OVER THE ROCKY GROUND...

THEN, WITHIN A FEW YARDS OF THE GERMAN MACHINE-GUN NEST, PINKY STUBBED HIS TOE ON A HARD ROCK. STUMBLING, HE LOST HIS BALANCE...

KEEP QUIET, BARTON!

OUCH!



AS HE CRASHED TO THE GROUND, HIS FINGERS AUTOMATICALLY TIGHTENED ON THE VEREY PISTOL'S TRIGGER, AND A FOUNTAIN OF BRILLIANT FLAME FLARED UPWARDS IN THE BLACK NIGHT...

YOU CLUMSY IDIOT,
BARTON! BRINGING
YOU ALONG WAS
THE WORST MISTAKE
I EVER
MADE!



INSTANTLY, THE GERMAN MACHINE-GUN
SPRANG INTO LIFE! THE RAIDING PARTY
DIVED FOR COVER AS SEARING
LEAD STREAKED OVERHEAD...



SAVAGELY, MORTARS JOINED IN THE ATTACK AND POUNDED THE BRITISH POSITION. PINKY FELT BITTER. IT WAS HIS FAULT. IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR HIS CLUMSINESS, THEY WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SPOTTED ...

WE'LL BE LUCKY IF WE GET OUT OF HERE, BARTON!

I KNOW, SARGE.



THROUGH THE LONG HOURS OF THE NIGHT, THE PATROL LAY UNDER HEAVY FIRE. BUT THE WALLS OF ROCK SURROUNDING THEIR POSITION SAVED THEM. GRADUALLY, THE BARRAGE SLACKENED AND THEY MADE THEIR WAY BACK TO THE SHATTERED VILLAGE...

TAKE IT STEADY, MEN! WE WON'T HAVE MUCH OF A CHANCE IF THE JERRIES SPOT US!



Chapter 4. *Retreat to Glory!*

THE PATROL REACHED THE VILLAGE SAFELY. BUT AT DAWN NEXT MORNING, MORTAR BOMBS BEGAN TO RAIN ON THE RUINED BUILDINGS ...



EVEN AS DECKER SPOKE, A WAVE OF GERMAN SOLDIERS CHARGED TOWARDS THE VILLAGE. BUT THE BANSHIRES FOUGHT BACK AND A STORM OF METAL LASHED THE GERMAN LINES ...



AGAIN, THE GERMANS LAUNCHED THEMSELVES AT THE DEFENDERS. BUT, SUPPLIED BY THE AMMUNITION BROUGHT BY PINKY, THE BANSHIRES MANAGED TO BEAT THEM BACK...



PINKY WAS FIRING WITH THE REST, HIS RIFLE SMOKING IN HIS HANDS! HE FELT NO FEAR, HIS THOUGHTS LOST IN CONCENTRATION AS HE AIMED, FIRED AND WORKED THE BOLT OF HIS RIFLE...



THE ATTACK SLACKENED AND FINALLY A LULL CAME IN THE BATTLE. DECKER AND WHEELAN TALKED OVER THEIR PROSPECTS...

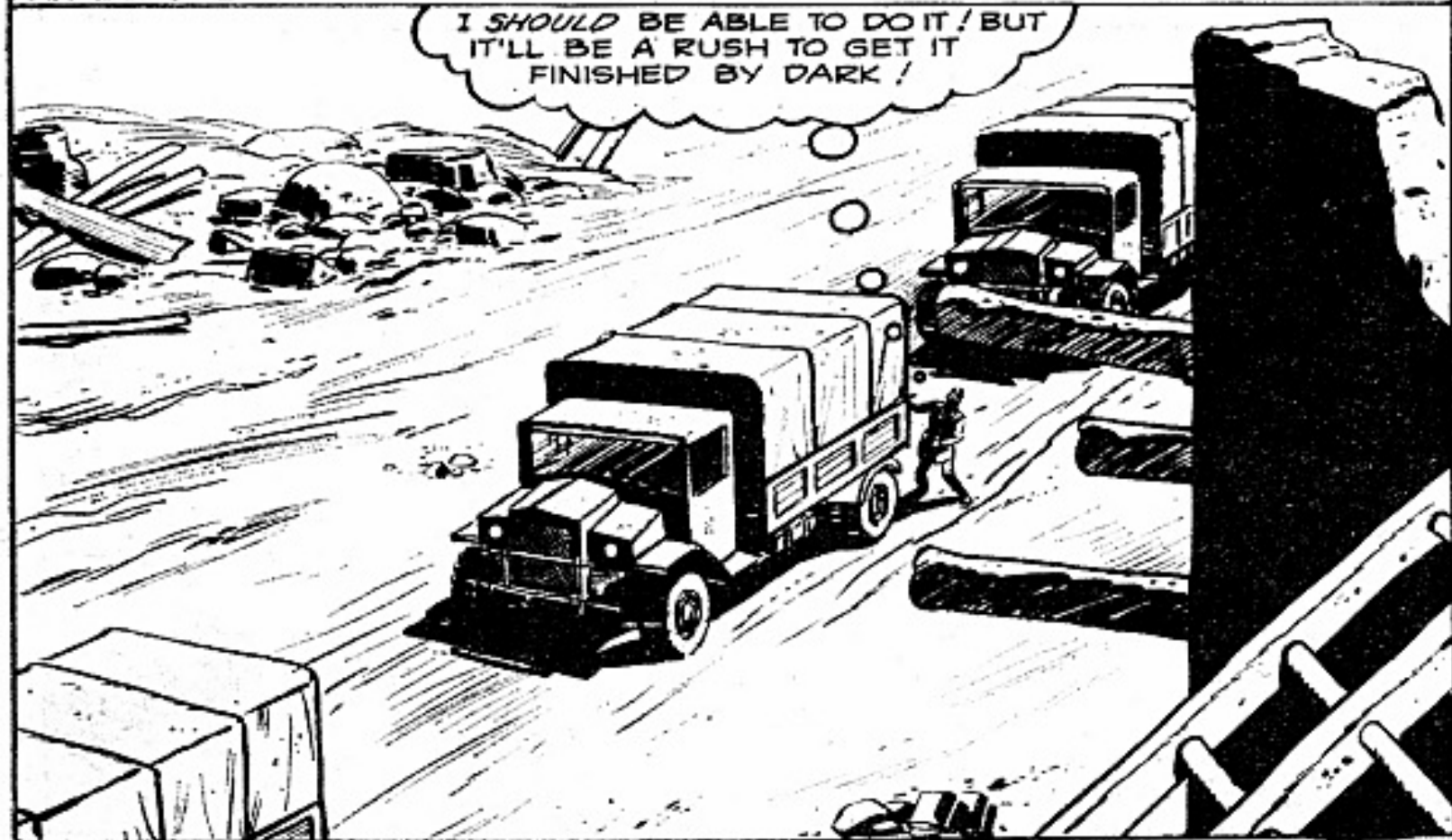
ANOTHER ATTACK LIKE THAT, AND WE'LL BE OUT OF AMMO AGAIN!

I KNOW. UNLESS WE GET SOME OUTSIDE HELP, WE'VE HAD IT!



PINKY HAD OVERHEARD THE SERGEANTS' CONVERSATION. DETERMINED TO MAKE AMENDS FOR HIS CLUMSINESS THE PREVIOUS DAY, HE STRUCK ON AN IDEA. HE BEGAN TO INSPECT THE TRUCKS SCATTERED IN THE VILLAGE...

I SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO IT! BUT IT'LL BE A RUSH TO GET IT FINISHED BY DARK!



PINKY WAS IN HIS ELEMENT INSPECTING THE DAMAGED TRUCKS. HIS NIMBLE FINGERS WORKED AT LIGHTNING SPEED!

I'LL TAKE THIS FOR A START!



AS HE WAS STRETCHED OUT UNDER ONE OF THE TRUCKS, HE HEARD A FAMILIAR, GRATING VOICE. HIS JAW DROPPED...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING UNDER THERE, BARTON?

ER... I'M TRYING TO FIX UP ONE TRUCK WITH SPARES FROM THE OTHERS, SARGE. THEN, PERHAPS, WE CAN GET AWAY DURING THE NIGHT.



PINKY'S JAW DROPPED EVEN LOWER AT THE SERGEANT'S REPLY...

FOR ONCE, BARTON, YOU'VE THOUGHT OF A GOOD IDEA! BUT DON'T LET IT GO TO YOUR HEAD! GET THE JOB FINISHED BY DUSK!

S-SURE, SARGE! I WILL!



FLATTERED BY SERGEANT WHEELAN'S PRAISE, PINKY WORKED AT HIS TASK WITH GREATER SPEED, NOW AND THEN. AS HE RACED TO A FRESH TRUCK, A GERMAN MACHINE-GUN SPAT HOT LEAD.

THAT WAS TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT!



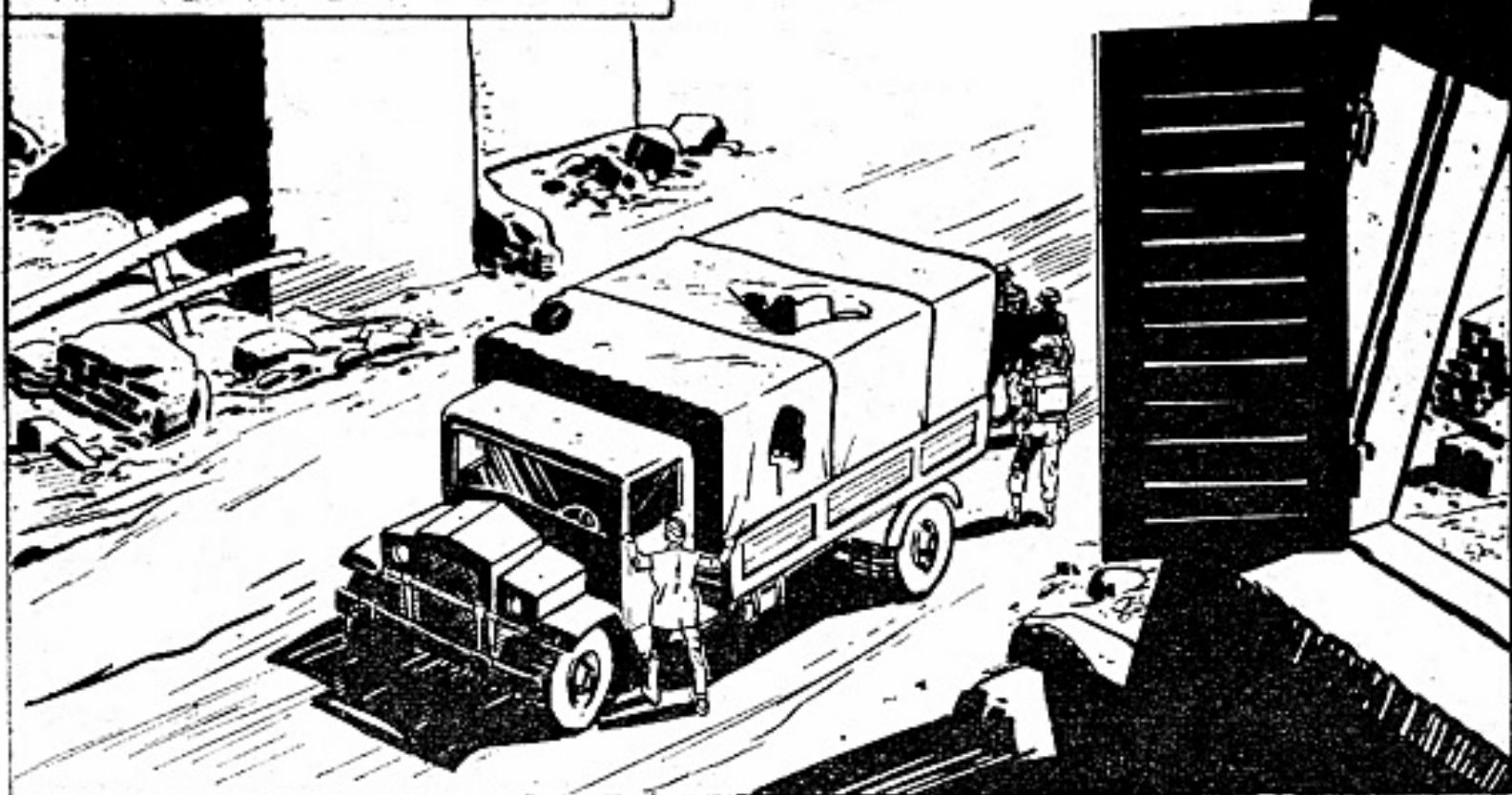
BY DUSK, PINKY HAD COMPLETED HIS TASK AND ONE RATHER BATTERED TRUCK WAS FIT TO DRIVE. HE PARKED THE PRECIOUS VEHICLE IN THE SCANT SHELTER OF A CRUMBLING WALL ...

WILL IT GO,
PINKY?

IT'S GOT A FEW DENTS,
SARGE, BUT IT'LL GET
US OUT OF HERE ~
IF THE JERRIES
DON'T STOP US!



WHEN DARKNESS FELL OVER THE VILLAGE, THE WEARY BANSHIRES REMNANTS PILED INTO THE WAITING TRUCK ~ THEIR LAST AND ONLY HOPE ...



WHILE THE SOLDIERS HOISTED THEMSELVES ABOARD THE TRUCK, SERGEANT WHEELAN AND TWO OTHER MEN KEPT THE UNSUSPECTING GERMANS BUSY COVERING THE DESPERATE ATTEMPT AT A BREAK-OUT...

MOVE, PINKY! WE'VE GOT TO GET WELL CLEAR BEFORE THE JERRIES NOTICE THE FIRING HAS STOPPED!



AS THE ENGINE THUNDERED INTO LIFE, THE THREE MEN RACED FOR THE LORRY, BUT SERGEANT WHEELAN WAS STILL SOME YARDS AWAY WHEN A SHELL BURST CLOSE TO HIM.

SERGEANT WHEELAN'S BOUGHT IT!



IN HIS DRIVING MIRROR, PINKY SAW THE INJURED SERGEANT FALL TO THE GROUND...

THAT'S SERGEANT WHEELAN! CAN'T LEAVE HIM THERE!



LEAPING FROM THE CAB, PINKY RAN BACK TO THE FALLEN MAN...

WOUNDED IN THE LEG, SERGEANT WHEELAN WAS STILL CONSCIOUS. STEP BY STEP, THROUGH THE NERVE-WRACKING PATTERN OF SHELL-BURSTS, PINKY HELPED THE DAZED MAN TO THE TRUCK...

COME BACK, PINKY!
YOU CAN'T SAVE HIM!
YOU'LL BE BLOWN TO BITS!

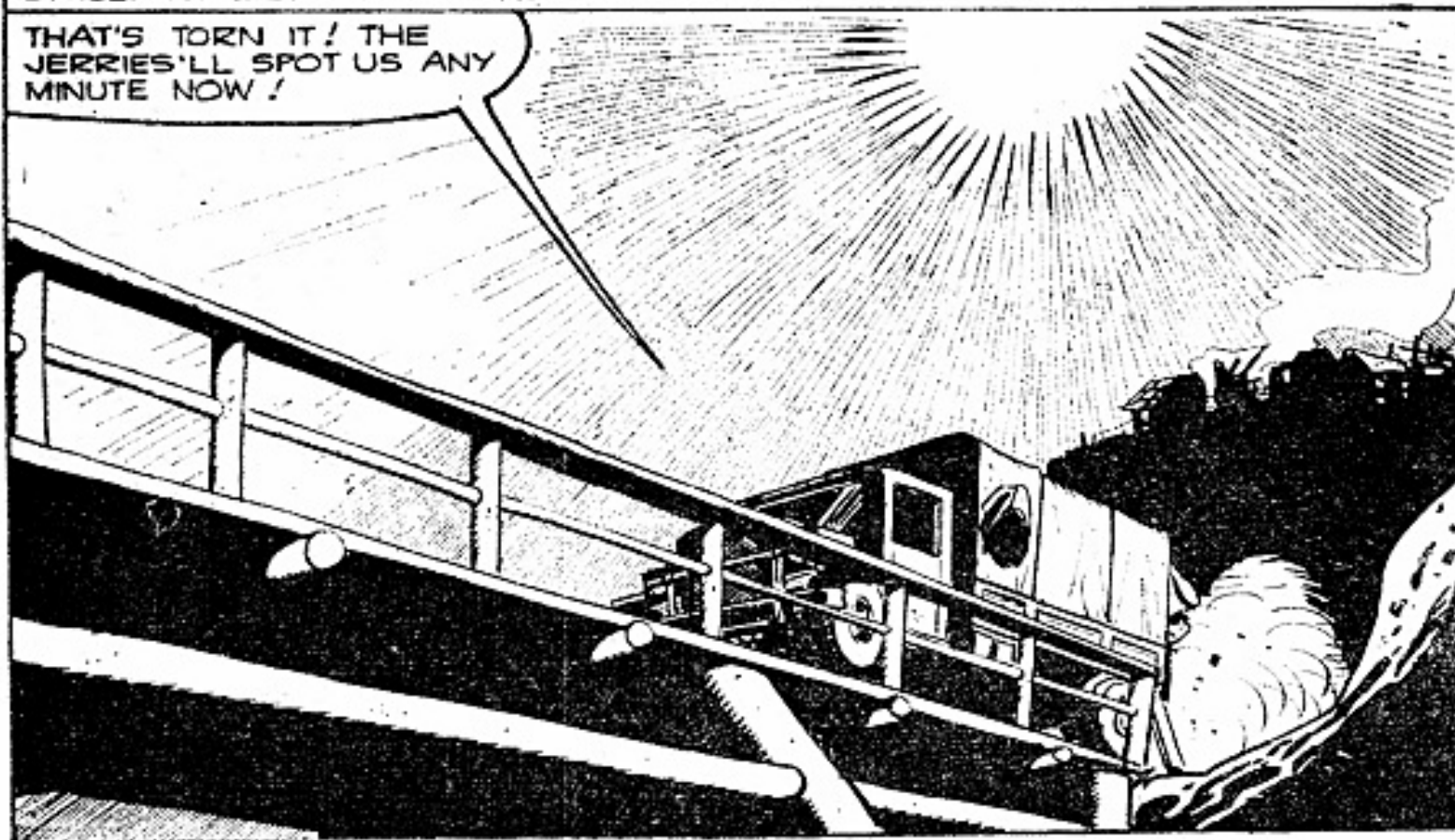


WILLING HANDS HELPED WHEELAN ABOARD. WITH A ROAR, THE LORRY SPED FROM THE FLATTENED VILLAGE TOWARDS THE FRAGILE BRIDGE OVER THE RAVINE...



SUDDENLY, AS THE NOSE OF THE TRUCK LURCHED ON TO THE EDGE OF THE BRIDGE, A STAR-SHELL BURST HIGH OVER THE VILLAGE, CASTING A BRILLIANT LIGHT OVER THE SCENE!

THAT'S TORN IT! THE JERRIES'LL SPOT US ANY MINUTE NOW!



ALMOST AT ONCE, THE NIGHT WAS RIPPED IN SHREDS BY THE SHRIEK AND SCREAM OF A VENGEFUL ARTILLERY BARRAGE...

THEY'RE GETTING THE RANGE...

ONLY TEN YARDS TO GO!



HEART IN MOUTH, PINKY DROVE THE LORRY AT SNAIL'S-PACE OVER THE GROANING, SWAYING TIMBERS OF THE BRIDGE...

IT'S GOT TO HOLD...



BUT AS THE LUMBERING LORRY DROVE SAFELY OFF THE CREAKING STRUCTURE, SERGEANT DECKER SPOTTED TWO PURSUERS...

TWO ARMoured CARS
BEHIND US! BREAK
OUT THE GRENADES!
STOP THE LORRY,
PINKY!



THE TRUCK JARRED TO A HALT. WHILE HIS MEN HOSED THE ARMoured CARS WITH THEIR STENS, SERGEANT DECKER, CARRYING A BAG FULL OF GRENADES, CHARGED BACK TO THE BRIDGE...

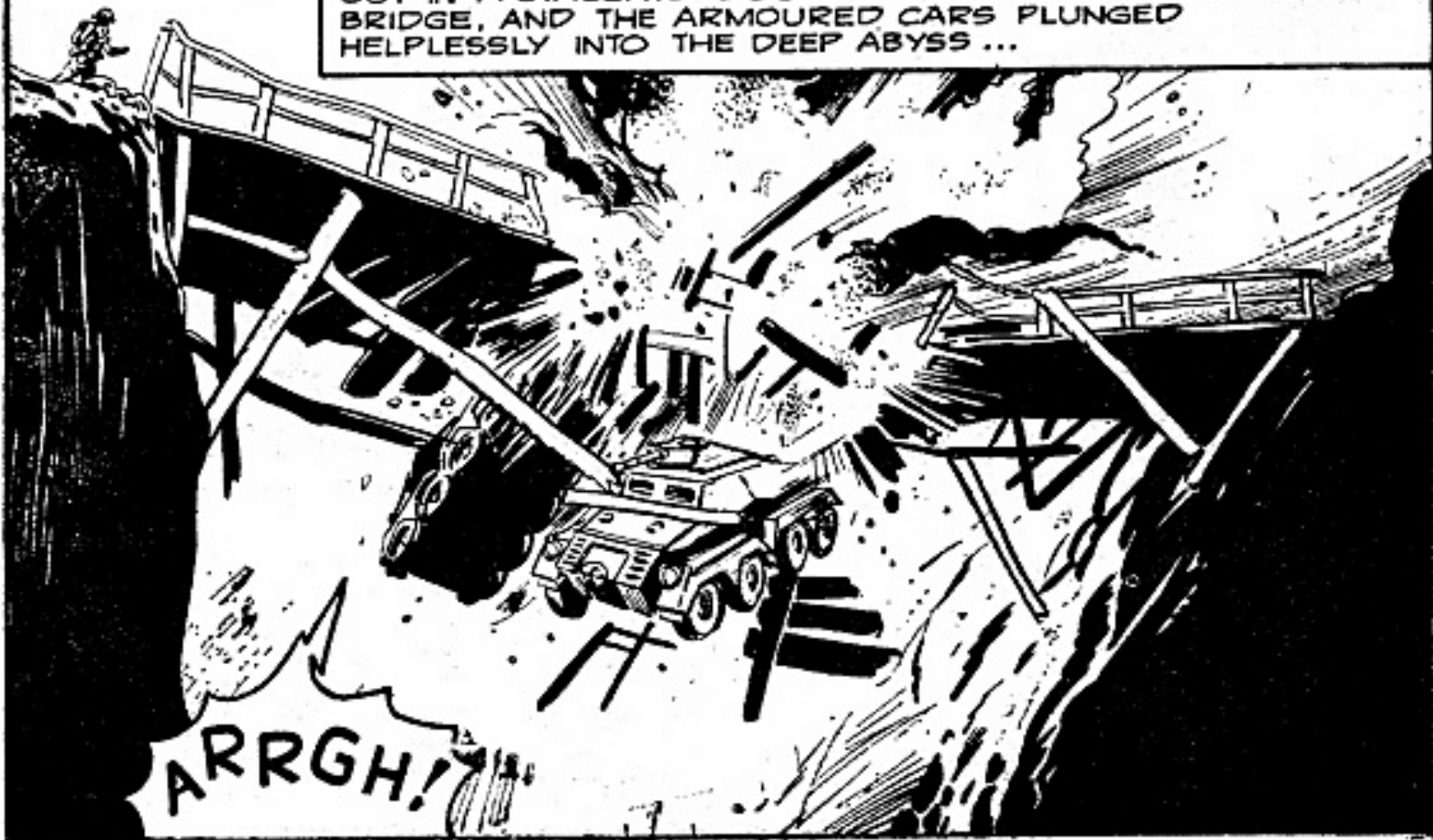
MAKE
THOSE
JERRIES
KEEP THEIR
HEADS
DOWN!



THE ARMoured CARS WERE HALF WAY ACROSS THE BRIDGE WHEN DECKER THREW THE HAVERSACK FULL OF GRENADES.

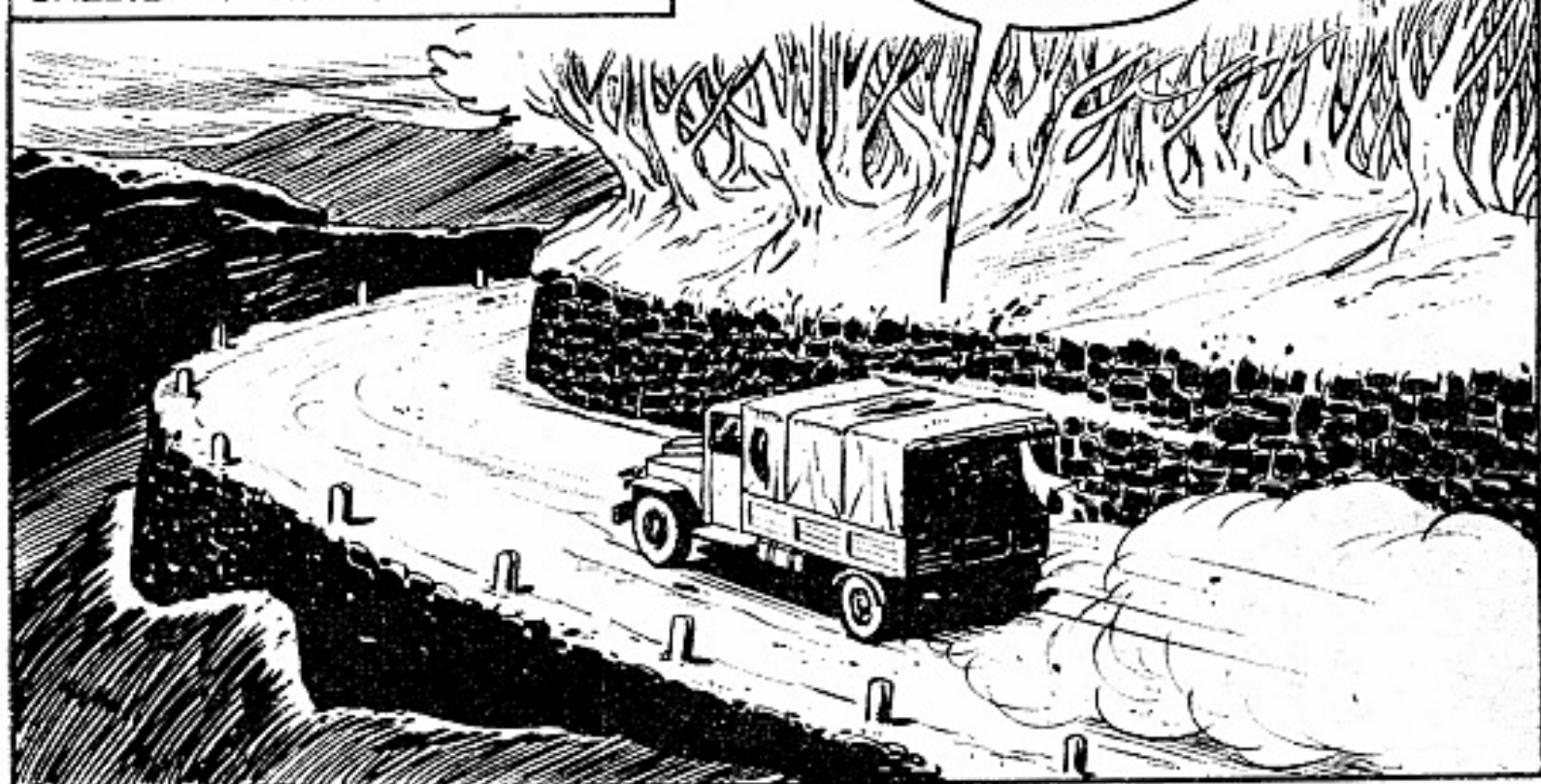


WITH A DEAFENING EXPLOSION, THE GRENADES CRASHED OUT IN A STACCATO BOOM AS THEY HIT THE SPLINTERING BRIDGE, AND THE ARMoured CARS PLUNGED HELPLESSLY INTO THE DEEP ABYSS ...



THE MOMENT DECKER WAS BACK IN THE TRUCK, PINKY SLAMMED HIS FOOT ON THE ACCELERATOR, AND THE JUBILANT BANSHIRES THUNDERED ROUND THE SHELTER OF THE HILL.

ATTABOY, PINKY!
I NEVER THOUGHT
WE'D MAKE IT OVER
THE BRIDGE-BUT
YOU DID IT, SLOW
AND EASY!



AS THE TRUCK RUMBLERD ALONG THE SHELTERED ROAD, PINKY SMILED WITH PRIDE...

I WAS
SCARED,
TOO, BUT I
HAD TO
DO IT...



HIS HEAD POUNDING WITH TIREDNESS, PINKY STRUGGLED TO STAY AWAKE AS HE DROVE THE DRONING TRUCK THROUGH THE NIGHT...

ONLY ANOTHER HOUR
AND WE'LL BE BACK
AT BRIGADE!



A FEW MINUTES LATER, PINKY BLINKED HIS RED-RIMMED EYES AS HE STARED DOWN THE ROAD. SOMETHING WAS MOVING IN THE SHADOW OF THE HILL AHEAD!

THERE'S SOMETHING AHEAD,
SARGE. HOW ABOUT SHOVING
SOME GUNS UP FRONT?



OKAY,
PINKY! I'LL
COME IN THE
CAB WITH
YOU!

ROLLING BACK THE CANVAS COVERING ON THE LORRY, SERGEANT DECKER SWUNG DOWN TO SIT BESIDE PINKY...

WHAT IS IT, PINKY?

I CAN'T MAKE IT OUT, YET!
WAIT TILL WE GET CLOSER!



AS THEY NEARED THE MYSTERIOUS OBJECT, PINKY'S FACE SET IN A GRIM SCOWL OF RECOGNITION...

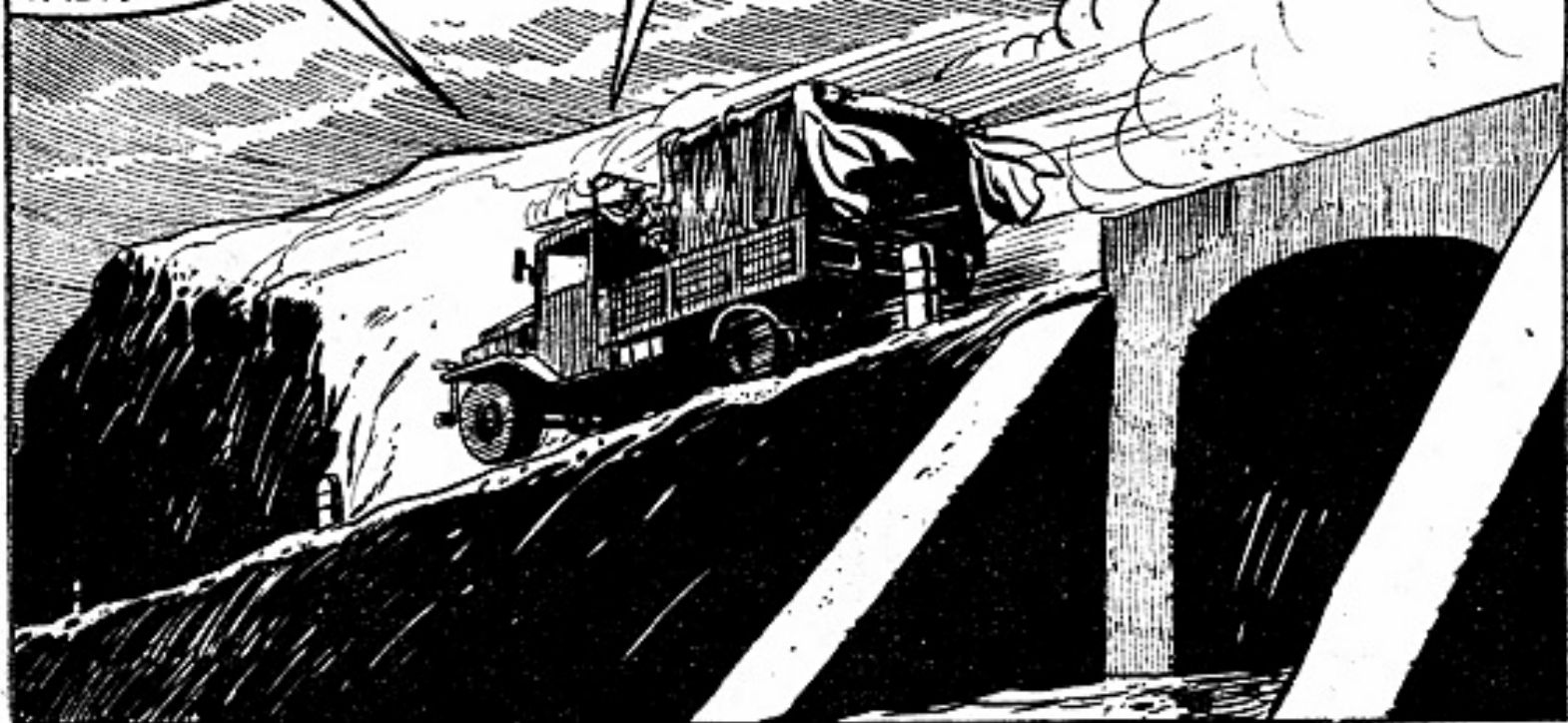
IT'S A JERRY ROAD-BLOCK, SARGE! TELL THE LADS TO START SHOOTING WHEN WE GET CLOSE!



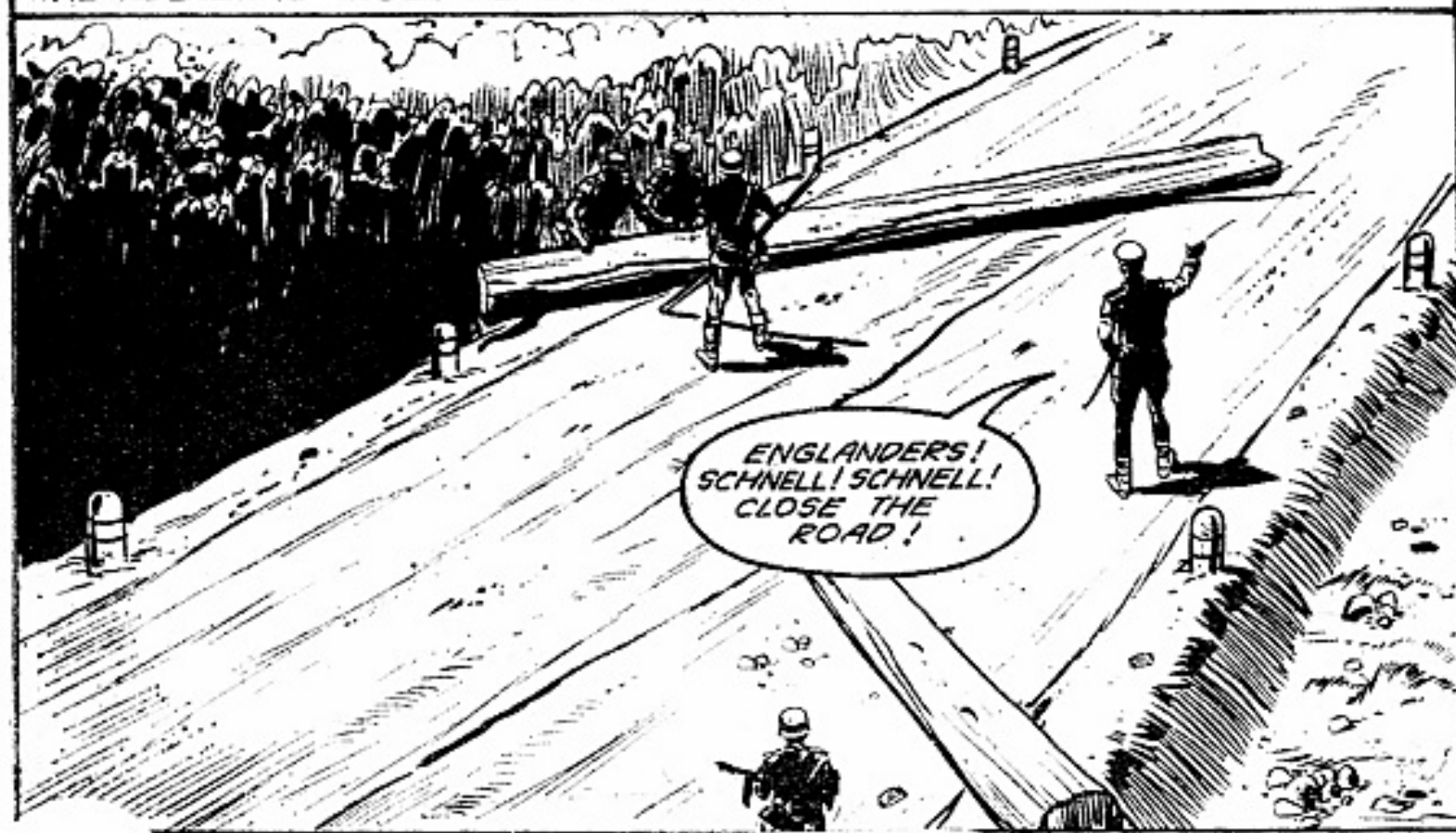
SWAYING PRECARIOUSLY ON THE BUMPY ROAD, THE LORRY SWEEPED DOWN TOWARDS THE STARTLED GERMANS ON THE ROAD-BLOCK...

HOPE YOU KNOW
WHAT YOU'RE
DOING, PINKY!
WE'RE COMING
UP MIGHTY
FAST!

THE BLOCK IS ONLY PARTLY CLOSED,
SARGE. I'M GOING TO TRY TO
GET THROUGH THE GAP!



THE GERMANS HAD COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THIS WAS THE DRIVER'S INTENTION. QUICKLY, THEY ATTEMPTED TO CLOSE THE ROAD-BLOCK BEFORE THE ROCKETING TRUCK REACHED THEM...



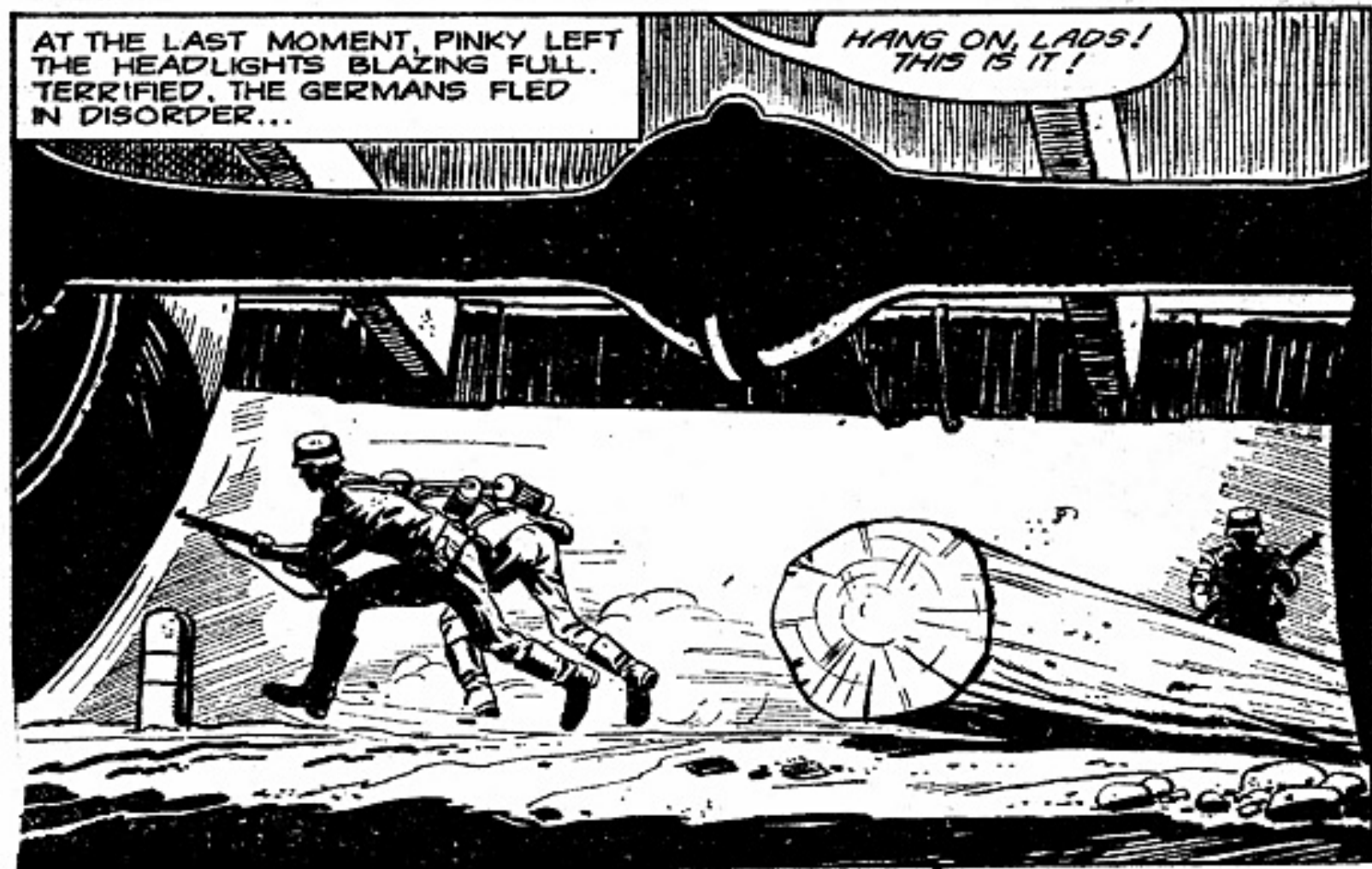
AS THE SCREAMING TYRES BROUGHT HIM CLOSER TO THE BARRIER, PINKY FLASHED HIS HEADLIGHTS ON AND OFF TO SPEAR SHAFTS OF LIGHT STRAIGHT INTO THE EYES OF THE CONFUSED GERMANS...

ACH! I AM
DAZZLED!



AT THE LAST MOMENT, PINKY LEFT THE HEADLIGHTS BLAZING FULL. TERRIFIED, THE GERMANS FLED IN DISORDER...

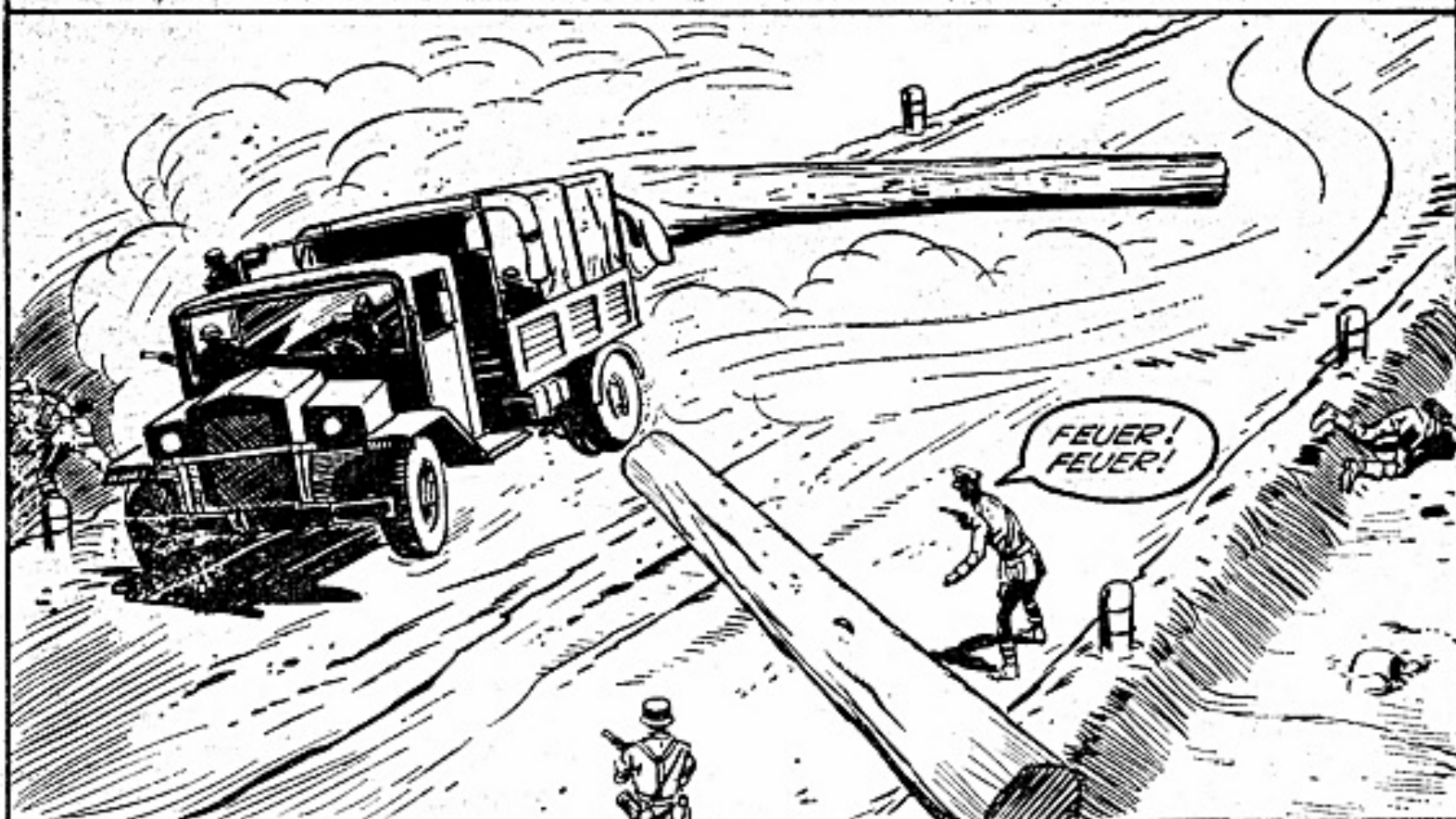
HANG ON, LADS!
THIS IS IT!



THE SPEEDING TRUCK SWUNG IN A TIGHT, EXPERTLY CONTROLLED SKID ROUND THE END OF THE FIRST TREE TRUNK, SPILLING THE MEN IN THE BACK IN A TANGLED HEAP ON THE FLOOR...



IMMEDIATELY, PINKY'S SKILLED HANDS RIGHTED THE LURCHING MONSTER AND, SPINNING THE STEERING WHEEL IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION, HE SLID THE TRUCK AROUND THE PROTRUDING END OF THE SECOND TREE TRUNK...



CLEAR OF THE ROAD-BLOCK, THE TRUCK SPED AWAY, STILL SWAYING WILDLY. ONE OF THE MEN TOSSED A GRENADE AS THEY DREW AWAY...

SOMETHING TO REMEMBER US BY, JERRY!

AAGH!



OUT OF SIGHT OF THE ROAD-BLOCK, SERGEANT DECKER TURNED TO PINKY...

YOU'VE DONE IT AGAIN, PINKY! NO DOUBT ABOUT IT- YOU'RE A DARNED MARVEL!



AT LAST, THE BANSHIRES ARRIVED AT BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS, AND EXCITEDLY PILED OUT OF THE BATTERED TRUCK. WITH A RAUCOUS CHEER, THEY GATHERED AROUND PINKY...

GOOD OLD PINKY!
YOU OUGHT TO BE A
RACING DRIVER,
FELLER!

TH-THANKS,
CHUMS!



SUDDENLY, THE JUBILANT
OVATION WAS CUT SHORT
BY A LOUD AND
FEARSOME VOICE...

BARTON!



LIMPING, SERGEANT WHEELAN STEPPED FROM THE TRUCK AND STOOD BEFORE PINKY. THE R.A.S.C. MAN GULPED FEARFULLY...

THANKS FOR SAVING MY LIFE, BARTON...
I GUESS I OWE YOU AN APOLOGY!



YOU'RE AS GOOD A FIGHTING MAN AS I'VE COME ACROSS ANYWHERE... AND THE BEST DRIVER I'VE EVER SEEN! THANKS, PINKY~ FOR ALL OF US!



PINKY LED THE GRINNING PARTY OF BANSHIRES TO THE HEADQUARTERS BUILDING. HE HAD BEEN ACCEPTED - SERGEANT WHEELAN'S WORDS HAD SET THE SEAL ON THAT. AT LAST HE HAD EARNED HIMSELF A PLACE ALONGSIDE THE WARRIORS HE HAD ADMIRER FOR SO LONG...



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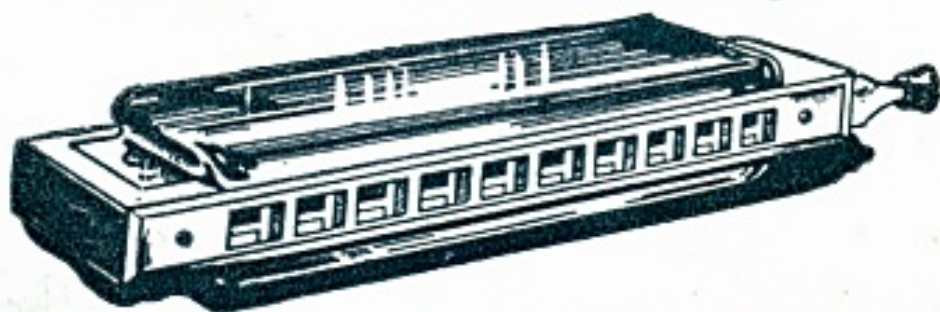
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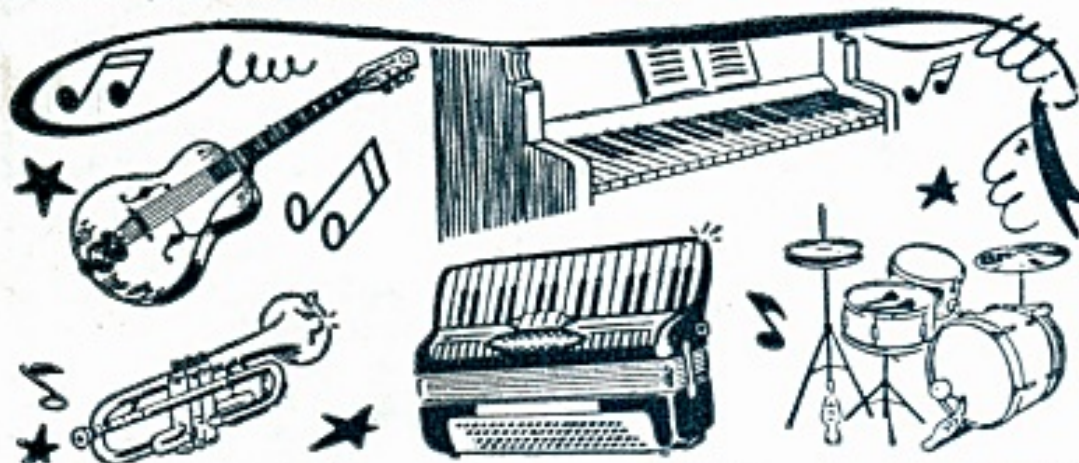


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